the weekly Standard

FEBRUARY 9, 2004 • $3.95

BACK TO 1984
NOEMIE EMERY

Why the Long Face?

John Kerry, Frontrunner

Fred Barnes
Matthew Continetti
Andrew Ferguson

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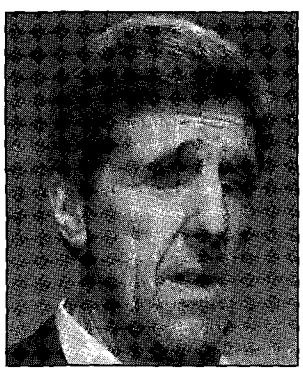

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The *New York Times*'s "Conservative Beat"

Ana Marie Cox, editor of the excellent new webzine *Wonkette*, has put her finger on one of those obsessions that animate newsroom chatter in Washington and New York: "Everyone's straining to describe exactly how weird it is that the *New York Times* has put former media reporter David Kirkpatrick on a new 'conservative beat.'"

She's right about the straining, but as we will show, what the *Times* is up to is far less weird than it looks. First, though, here's what *New York Observer* media reporter Sridhar Pappu had to say about Kirkpatrick's new beat:

> For the next year, David Kirkpatrick—formerly the man charged with covering the book publishing industry—will cover conservatives. Not the Republican Party or the Bush administration. No, it's real conservatives.
>
> In an announcement earlier this month *Times* national editor Jim Roberts said that Mr. Kirkpatrick "will examine conservative forces in religion, politics, law, business and the media—a job that will take him across the country and make him a frequent presence in Washington. His coverage will cut across the political campaigns this season," Mr. Roberts continued, "but we expect that much of what he does will transcend the race itself and delve into the issues and personalities that drive—and sometimes divide—conservatives."
>
> "I winced a little when I read that job announcement," said *Times* executive editor Bill Keller, "because it was a little like 'the *New York Times* discovers this strange, alien species called conservatives,' and that's not what this is about."
>
> If it seems a little wacky, well, it is. Intellectual movements seldom draw the attention of beat reporters. There is, after all, no correspondent covering think tanks for the *Washington Post*. What the *Times*' new beat means to do, Mr. Keller said, is this: Give a great big bear hug to the disparate but at times interconnected conservative organizations—evangelical Christians and anti-abortionists, for example—all as a way of gaining a peek into who the Bush administration listens to, and why.

But again, Kirkpatrick's assignment only seems wacky. The key to the whole enterprise can be found in the national editor's expressed interest in issues that *divide* conservatives. Particularly, as can be seen in the pieces Kirkpatrick has been filing, in the issues that divide conservatives from the Bush White House.

Here are the headlines for Kirkpatrick's first three pieces on the new beat: "Bush's Push for Marriage Falls Short for Conservatives"; "Conservative Groups Differ on Bush Words on Marriage"; "Concerned Bloc of Republicans Wonders Whether Bush Is Conservative Enough."

In short, there's no weirdness here. From Paul Krugman on down, the *Times* offers its readers an extensive array of Bush-bashing features. The "conservative beat" is simply a clever new addition to this menu. ♦

Accentuate the Positive

Perhaps you've wondered why the Democratic presidential candidates look so good these days on TV while President Bush is behind the 8-ball. Well, Bob Lichter of the Center for Media and Public Affairs has the explanation.

From January 1, when the Democratic race went full throttle, to January 18, the day before the Iowa caucuses, the coverage of the entire Democratic field on ABC, NBC, and CBS was 71 percent positive. That's the most favorable coverage of presidential candidates ever recorded by Lichter's group. John Kerry's coverage was 96 percent favorable. John Edwards's was 100 percent favorable—not a single unkind word about him was aired on the nets. No wonder he surged in Iowa.

Yes, Howard Dean took some hits, but his coverage was still 58 percent positive. What about Bush? Since the war in Iraq ended last April, his coverage has been 68 percent unfavorable, 32 percent favorable. ♦

The BBC's Disgrace (cont.)

While most of our attention was focused on New Hampshire last week, there was also big political news in Britain. On Wednesday afternoon, the Hutton Inquiry into the death of Dr. David Kelly—a weapons expert in Tony Blair's government who committed suicide last July—released its report. Lord Hutton, who until his retirement was one of Britain's most respected judges, found that no one in the government had intentionally "sexed up" Blair's September 2002 dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and that no one in the government had acted improperly in confirming that Kelly was the Ministry of Defense employee to whom BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan had spoken. Hutton's only criticism of the government was that it should have made it more clear to Kelly that his name would be confirmed if a journalist asked if he had been Gilligan's source.

In contrast to the almost complete

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exoneration of Blair, Lord Hutton had some choice words for Gilligan and the BBC. He called Gilligan's chief accusations against the government "unfounded," and concluded that "the editorial system" that permitted Gilligan's story to run unchecked was "defective." He also faulted BBC management for lack of oversight after Gilligan's broadcast, when it responded to the government's criticism by digging in its heels, rather than acknowledging and correcting its mistakes.

If all of this sounds a little familiar to readers, it might be because Josh Chafetz argued precisely these points in our pages five months ago ("The Disgrace of the BBC," August 25, 2003). In a subsequent letter to the editor, BBC Head of Political Programs Fran Unsworth wrote that, "Many of [Chafetz's] allegations relating to the story regarding the now notorious intelligence dossier which ended in the tragic death of Dr. David Kelly are best left to Lord Hutton to pronounce on in due course." Last week, Lord Hutton did just that, and Unsworth's bosses—BBC chairman Gavyn Davies and director general Greg Dyke—resigned. ♦

New Hampshire Postscript

We hope you were reading the daily dispatches from the New Hampshire primary on *weeklystandard.com.* But in case you missed them, here's David Tell's priceless description of the Dean demographic in action:

"Dean was doing his now-standard rap about the 'increasing concentration of the media' and how it's a 'huge problem' that nowadays 90 percent of Americans purportedly get all their information from the same 11 corporations. It matters a great deal where you get your information from, the governor explained. After all, a full 80 percent of people who watch Fox, along with 50 percent of people who watch CNN, still think Saddam Hussein had something to do with 9/11. But 'if you listen to NPR, only 30 percent' of you are likely to make such a boneheaded mistake.

"The moment Dean mentioned NPR, his audience—I'm not making this up—erupted into cheers and applause. 'I must confess,' the governor then modestly acknowledged, 'I am an NPR fan, too,' which brought him a second, even louder round of cheers and applause. A couple minutes later, a balding, nerdy, middle-aged man rose from his seat in the crowd and told the governor that he and his wife were also 'avid NPR fans—and avid Howard Dean fans.' More cheers and more applause.

"I listen to NPR myself, you understand. But really, now. When Howard Dean says he's *just like you* to people just like this, I have to believe that, if anything, he's limiting his popular appeal, not expanding it." ♦

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Casual

A Mild Distaste for Nature

Nature isn't, as they used to say in the 1960s, my bag. I've known this for some time but realized it afresh recently when, on a non-matrimonial trip to the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, I found myself not unimpressed—no one could ever be that—but a bit repelled by the scene before me. Niagara Falls is one of those grand sites that crush one by their power and sublimity. After gazing for six or seven minutes at the vast, relentless gush of water cascading over the horseshoe-shaped falls, I felt both fatigue and personal diminution. Walking away, I thought, Nature 48, Humanity 3. I prefer a closer game.

I've never seen it, but I suspect I should much prefer the Hoover Dam, where nature has been calmed and controlled. The gardens at Versailles are my notion of how nature ought to be: contorted and twisted and made beautiful for human beings. The Duc de Saint-Simon talked of "the proud pleasures of compelling nature"; more than compelled, I like it subdued. Humanity 28, Nature 7 is a score I prefer.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was, I am told, the first person to make a serious fuss about the grandeur of nature in its wilderness state. After him it became a cult, and, owing to Rousseau's influence, the tourist industry began in earnest in Switzerland, the country of his birth. The cult has of course since spread well beyond cultish bounds. The man who brought us the Social Contract, the Noble Savage, the worship of nature for its own sake, Jean-Jacques has lots for which to apologize.

All I wish to argue is that nature can be overdone and overrated. Nor will it do to stare at it overlong, except perhaps in a great landscape painting. Socrates claimed "the trees and fields will teach me nothing"; the mountains and seas would not, I suspect, have taught him much more. Samuel Johnson felt a similar apathy toward nature. Along with supplying the conditions to make human life possible—no small point, granted—nature reminds one of one's own less than infinitesimal role in the greater scheme of things. Some of us, long aware of this fact, do not require ceaseless reminders.

Nature is fine in its place, but for me that place is on the other side of the window. I consider it best viewed from inside a house or a car. I enjoy a beautiful sunrise or sunset, though not for long. I have never lived for an extended period facing water, yet nearly every morning I drive past Lake Michigan, observing it in its various moods and changing colors, from placid to oceanic angry, from azure to gun-metal gray. Mostly, though, I am grateful not to be in it.

Am I intensely urban or merely deeply insensitive? I was born, brought up, and have lived most of my life in Chicago, a city built on the flat prairie where nature is not the main attraction, or, really, any attraction at all. One has, rather, to scratch around a good bit to find evidence of it. A few years ago I had lunch with a writer living in San Francisco who said he could never give up his apartment because of the wonderful afternoon light it attracted. This would not go down well in Chicago, where good light tends to be fluorescent.

In *Poetry* magazine a few years back, I read a poem called "Men Say Brown," by Henry M. Seiden, which contains the line: "The average woman knows / 275 colors—and men know eight." My guess is that, botanizers aside, most men's knowledge of trees and flowers is no greater than their knowledge of colors. If pressed, I believe I can name eight or ten kinds of tree and not many more flowers. I have probably written more than a million words for print, but I am certain you will never find "sycamore" or "dahlia" among them. Nor will you discover a character in a story of mine pausing by a rhododendron. I consider lengthy descriptions of nature in novels to be pure *longueurs*. The major American writer who least interests me is Thoreau.

Nature is not what we should nowadays call a fun guy (perhaps a fungi is closer to it). I am grateful for its invention of the cauliflower, beefsteak tomatoes, and the seedless tangerine, but it also brings us those delightful demonstrations of arbitrary power known as avalanches, typhoons, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and other crushing jollities; and let us not forget all the charming viruses, droughts, and famines that seem never to be in short supply.

I do not despise nature. I'm not indifferent to pollution, I'm not pleased by forest fires, I don't want to choke off our waterways, I don't suggest that we polish off what remains of the endangered species. All I ask is to be spared the sentimentality of nature lovers. Let's call a nice scene a nice scene, and get back to work. What, after all, did nature, like posterity, ever do for us?

Joseph Epstein

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Dr. Lori Arviso Alvord, M.D., Navajo. Surgeon, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Dartmouth Medical School, author of *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear.*

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Use the (Special) Force

Richard H. Schultz Jr.'s "Showstoppers" (Jan. 26) is one of the most significant contributions to national security to be published since 9/11. The article is a profound analysis of America's historic aversion toward anything remotely at variance with the orthodox and conventional strategic culture. "Showstoppers" is an intellectual breakthrough and should be required reading among U.S. national security personnel.

John J. Tierney Jr.
Washington, DC

Richard H. Schultz Jr.'s brilliant study on Special Operations Forces and the constraints placed on them to fight terrorism prior to September 11, 2001, superbly supports what has been common knowledge since September 12, 2001: The Clinton administration did not do enough to protect the United States from international terrorists.

Schultz's nine "showstoppers" amount to a list of Clinton administration excuses for not responding to eight years of terrorist attacks against American targets, ranging from "terrorism is a crime, not war," to "it's too risky," and "the guys suggesting retaliation are a bunch of cowboys." A lot of these came from the Pentagon brass, but as we know from reading the Constitution, the president is the commander in chief of our armed forces, not the generals. All it would have taken was a strong, firm directive from Bill Clinton that he wanted the terrorists hunted down at all costs. As we have learned from our current commander in chief, it takes strong moral fiber and a sense of right and wrong to make that kind of call and then to be respected enough to have it obeyed. Clinton lost on both counts.

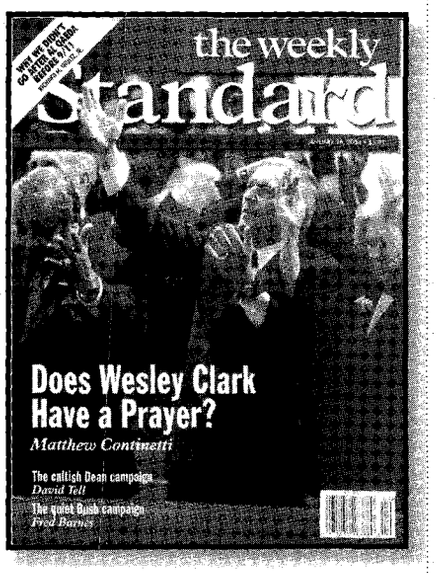
Cathy May
Wichita, KS

Totem and Taboo

In "The Diversity Taboo" (Jan. 26), Heather Mac Donald repeats a familiar, but no less tragic, story about "diversity." The term has been used as an ingredient of the prevailing need to avert our gaze from a very uncomfortable circumstance: the serious failure of some minorities to compete successfully in the marketplace, apparently because of real shortcomings in job-relevant skills. The compulsion to be ostentatiously sensitive and "caring" has discouraged an adult recognition that we have a serious problem when it comes to minority education, and that the United States obviously owes its minority population a far more plausible effort to solve the problem.

Lawrence H. O'Neill
New York, NY

Heather Mac Donald's "The Diversity Taboo" is a most welcome airing of an important issue. I con-



cur with her views, but unfortunately she commits the same error made by many of her less enlightened colleagues in the media.

You see, Mac Donald treats racial preferences as being synonymous with affirmative action. That's not quite true. Had both the undergraduate and law school admission policies at the University of Michigan been declared unconstitutional last June, for example, affirmative action would have still been alive and well across the land. This is due, in some part, to the complicated history of affirmative action programs for education, business, and government.

Why are "diversity" and "affirmative action" not synonymous? The latter term, coined by President Kennedy, refers to action for the disadvantaged. On the other hand, diversity is defined in terms of membership in a racial group. Many of those who filed supporting briefs for the University of Michigan's admission policies spoke of "affirmative action," but their meaning was clearly "diversity" in the narrow, racialist sense.

Howard J. Pincus
San Diego, CA

We Were Joking

In regards to Matthew Continetti's "Evite: French for Avoid" (Jan. 19), I wanted to address his criticism towards Evite. Continetti's "Casual" essay clearly articulates the key features and functions of the Evite service. However, it also attempts to define Evite as spam, going so far as to recommend that it be banned under the president's new spam legislation. To be clear, and as Continetti well noted, an Evite is an online invitation initiated and sent by "a friend of yours." Therefore it is confusing as to how one can correlate Evite to spam. If an email from a personal contact is what you consider "unsolicited" email, then wouldn't all emails from your friends and family, whether sent through Outlook or any other mail client, be considered spam?

Certainly most people would prefer to receive an invitation to a best friend's birthday party than a solicitation to augment body parts or reduce student loans. At Evite we embrace the former.

John Foley
President, Evite.com
Los Angeles, CA

• • •

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More Caissons Rolling Along

Virtually since this magazine started eight years ago, we have argued that the American military, and especially the U.S. Army, was too small. We agreed with most defense experts that American troops need new technologies to "transform" their operations and maintain their tactical prowess. But we also took the position that the overall force had to be expanded to handle the many new missions, both combat and post-combat, in which we would find ourselves engaged in the post-Cold War world.

We are happy to report that, after doggedly resisting this argument, the Bush administration, in the person of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, has (more or less) accepted its logic. As the *Washington Post* reported on January 29, Rumsfeld has approved a 30,000-man increase in the troop strength of the Army. While hardly sufficient, this is a necessary and crucial step toward rebuilding America's armed forces in order to help accomplish a central task of American foreign policy: fostering a decent and more democratic order in the greater Middle East.

Alas, Rumsfeld has waited until nearly the last minute to make the right decision and has limited its value by taking half-measures. Facing an open-ended occupation of Iraq—Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently acknowledged that troop strength in Iraq will most likely remain over 100,000 through 2005, and perhaps beyond—the regular Army has been stretched to its breaking point; the force now assuming the second Iraq rotation is 40 percent National Guard and Army Reserve. Still, the Pentagon professes uncertainty as to whether this kind of deployment in the post-9/11 world is an anomaly or a new reality.

It's a reality. The acknowledgment of reality was announced by Army chief of staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker, a former Special Operations head brought back from retirement by Rumsfeld to reform the Army but also to help repair the ripped relationship between Rumsfeld and the Army. Perhaps Schoomaker can persuade Rumsfeld that a reform agenda for the military isn't inconsistent with an increase in its size, and that, given the world we live in—a world so different from the "strategic pause" expected by military reformers—both a transformed and a larger army are needed.

At the same time, it remains clear that Rumsfeld is less than fully committed to a significant expansion of the force. Distressingly, Schoomaker couched his announcement in the pillowy language of defense transformation: "We should take advantage of this movement that we currently have"—meaning the delicate and dangerous rotation of forces in and out of Iraq—"to reset and transform during this emergency. And that's what gives me the encouragement that in fact we can do this." This seems to make the "emergency" in Iraq a means to transforming the military. Instead, we need to design a force that can handle emergencies in Iraq—and secure our foreign policy ends.

Too many Pentagon leaders continue to delude themselves that the current pace of operations in the greater Middle East is an anomaly rather than the new norm. They seem not to have grasped the most basic fact about American foreign policy post 9/11—that the United States is promoting a new order in the region, not simply managing the current one. While this does not mean that we have embarked on endless military campaigns, it does mean that U.S. forces will be active and present in the region, in the service of furthering a decent alternative to the violent, corrupt, and anti-American status quo. Afghanistan and Iraq are the beginning, not the end, of what National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice describes as a "generational commitment."

The details of the plan to raise Army strength underscore the basic problem. The "increase" of 30,000 soldiers extends temporary measures already in place, including "stop-loss" orders that postpone the dates when troops leaving service may muster out. The planned renewal of stop-loss is no long-term solution, and it will have a bad effect on troop morale, especially coming on top of the Pentagon's inept handling of personnel matters during the Iraq war.

In keeping with another of its bad habits, the Pentagon also has not directly addressed the question of how it

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intends to pay for the manpower increase. This year, the costs will be covered by the $87 billion supplemental appropriation for operations and reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq. But that is no way to plan or to budget for the future. Nor is it a way to build long-term congressional and public support—which would be easy to secure, if the case were made—for the military we need.

The facts are simple: We reduced U.S. military strength too much in the 1990s—beginning in the first Bush presidency. The Clinton administration deepened the Bush cuts by hundreds of thousands of troops and hundreds of billions of dollars. And the care with which the Clinton Pentagon managed the "drawdown," shrinking the educational, training, and institutional base of the defense establishment as well as the size of the field force, makes reconstituting it all the harder. Simple neglect, in the form of a traditional demobilization, might have been less damaging. Nor has the Rumsfeld program of defense reform achieved anything close to the personnel and budgetary savings hoped for.

So the gap between America's strategic grasp and its military reach remains. Defense spending has increased during the Bush years, but virtually all of that has gone to the prosecution of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has not bought much new capability, either in weapons systems or troop strength.

This gap cannot in the end be bridged in an incremental, ad hoc way. The president's vision of a global "balance of power that favors freedom" rests on a foundation of sufficient American military strength. Increasing the size of the Army addresses the most immediate weakness in that foundation, but the overall structure of the U.S. military remains dangerously small. We note that the Democratic frontrunner, John Kerry, though not an advocate of increased military spending or capabilities in the past, has called for a two-division increase in the Army. We trust that the next president, whether a reelected Bush or a newly elected Kerry, will finally come to grips with our power deficit and commit us to the military we need for the world we live in.

—Tom Donnelly and William Kristol

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Bush vs. Kerry

It will be more interesting than you think.

BY JEFFREY BELL & FRANK CANNON

THE COME-FROM-BEHIND triumph of John Kerry in Iowa and New Hampshire does more than make the Massachusetts senator a prohibitive favorite for the Democratic presidential nomination. It marks the defeat of Howard Dean's antiwar, left-populist rebellion by the quintessential candidate of the Democratic establishment.

For Democrats, this is likely to mean a sophisticated, predictable, low-risk national campaign, somewhat analogous to Bob Dole's 1996 challenge of President Clinton. A Kerry nomination is precisely the kind of result aimed for by Democratic chairman Terry McAuliffe in his drive to front-load the primaries, assuring an early nominee who will have plenty of time to unify the party. In a bonus for McAuliffe, the prospective nominee opted out of his federal matching-funds subsidy, exempting him from the anachronistically low fundraising limits assigned to nomination fights. The Kerry campaign is free to spend as much as it can raise between now and the party convention.

For President Bush and his political team, the strategic landscape has become far simpler. Fallen by the wayside are such divergent scenarios as a centrist New Democrat trying to pick off a few of the red states, an anti-political man on horseback, an Old Left protectionist appeal to the agricultural and industrial heartland, and (within a very short time, we believe) a '60s-style challenge to America's role in the world.

Instead there will be an adroit, cautious, experienced nominee whose method of uniting his party will be to incorporate, at least rhetorically, some elements of all these Democratic strains, keeping open as many tactical options as possible. What most infuriates Howard Dean about John Kerry is the latter's tendency to alternate between the two possible answers to such seemingly binary questions as President Bush's invasion of Iraq. Dean, like Kerry's other opponents, has watched helplessly as the front-runner alternately takes hawkish and dovish stances, depending on the headlines of the week.

A Bush strategy keyed on labeling Kerry an extreme liberal will be far from easy. Many voters are more apt to see the sonorous Kerry as a judicious moderate than as a wild-eyed liberal adept at wearing a moderate's mask. Kerry will often pay lip service to the idea of the election as a stark issues referendum, but in practice he can be expected to resist or try to finesse most of the president's attempts to define the content of such a choice.

This is why the Kerry candidacy represents, at least potentially, a successful Democratic riposte to the Bush team's effort to achieve a Republican realignment. In an article in these pages just after the 2002 elections ("The Beginning of the Bush Epoch?" Dec. 9, 2002), we noted that such a realignment is historically implausible because of the tendency of popular post-World War II presidents seeking a second election victory to take few risks once they have opened up a lead over their challengers. This accounts for the phenomenon of "lonely landslides"—few if any down-ticket coattails—for such decisive second victories as Eisenhower (1956), Nixon (1972), Reagan (1984), and Clinton (1996).

On the other side of the ledger, though, were two elements thrown into high relief by the historic GOP gains in the 2002 elections. First was the unusual willingness of George W. Bush to risk his political standing by intervening on behalf of weaker Republican candidates down the ballot. This underpinning of realignment has if anything deepened since 2002. To a degree unique for a sitting president heading into his last campaign, Bush and his political aides have intertwined their formidable organizing efforts with those of state parties and contested candidacies all over the country, even in states not in play in the Electoral College.

The second factor favoring realignment, we argued, was the syndrome of "Bush hatred"—the tendency of prominent Democrats to take their various disagreements with the president to a level of implacability that made them look hysterical, while Bush came across as something of a mild-mannered innocent victim. This set the stage for Bush's outmaneuvering of then Majority Leader Tom Daschle in the 2002 Senate elections on such issues as homeland security.

This is where the Democrats seem less likely to repeat their mistakes of Bush's first two years. Their minority leaders in Congress, in part because they are minority leaders, loomed less large as obstructionists in 2003 than they did the year before. And while loathing of Bush has far from disappeared in the Democratic presidential race, Kerry's gaining of the upper hand is likely to put intelligent limits on Bush hatred in the presidential campaign from now on. As an obvious example, Kerry would never make Dean's blunder of seeming to begrudge the success of U.S. forces in the capture of Saddam Hussein. So assuming Kerry and other prominent Democrats manage to avoid such lapses, they may be positioned to reap the benefits of anti-Bush polarization without the disadvantages.

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The strategic challenge Bush now faces can be traced back to one of his greatest strengths as a candidate: his ability to get himself underestimated by Democratic opponents. There have been two pivotal races in Bush's career where he was running even or slightly behind his Democratic opponent heading into candidate debates: his 1994 challenge of Texas governor Ann Richards and the 2000 race against Vice President Al Gore. In both instances, Bush "won" these debates, took the lead in polls, and went on to victory in November.

Richards and Gore have the following things in common: Compared with Bush, they were far more experienced candidates, they were considered superb debaters, they were widely favored among political elites of both parties to out-debate Bush, and when the opposite occurred they were thrown badly off stride. Unlike Richards, candidate Gore made a recovery and nearly won the 2000 election. But even today, one wonders whether Gore has fully recovered from the shock of losing his debates with Bush.

How did Bush gain the upper hand against these opponents? (1) He treated his opponents with great respect, even in the face of hostility—in Gore's case, repeated and audible sighing at Bush's answers; in Richards's case, suggesting that Bush was a political novice and business failure who really didn't belong on the same stage with her. (2) He turned the debate, whenever possible, to a very few themes consistent with the campaign's issue strategy. (3) He remained calm and moderate, even when his opponent was behaving oddly (e.g., Gore's roaming the debate stage in a manner that suggested the demeanor of a stalker).

This strategy worked superbly in 1994 and 2000 in part because neither Richards nor Gore, nor their political teams, really knew very much about Bush. For a number of reasons—most particularly the feeling among Democrats that Bush had not really won the 2000 election and therefore deserved little respect—Bush continued to be underestimated by congressional Democrats in 2001 and 2002. Because of the mismatch between Democratic attacks and Bush's mild, moderate, "innocent victim" demeanor, observers in the middle instinctively sided with Bush.

By now, Democratic elites are less often fooled. They've been victims of Bush's mousetraps too often for that. And unlike Howard Dean, John Kerry will not walk into easy traps.

Moreover, the president has gotten into a habit of taking conservative positions, but using arguments that appeal far more to moderates than to conservatives to support the positions. When Senate Democrats filibuster Bush's conservative nominees to the federal judiciary, they do so because they favor a continued liberal majority on the Supreme Court concerning such issues as abortion and gay rights. They are quite open about this, and as a result the liberal base is highly mobilized.

In order to appeal to moderate voters, Bush implies that Senate Democrats oppose the advancement of Latinos or women, which voters find difficult to believe.

Bush repeatedly attacks the Democrats for the filibusters, but seldom if ever mentions the issues actually at stake. Presumably in order to appeal to moderate or undecided voters, he implies that Senate Democrats oppose the advancement of Latinos or women, which voters find difficult to believe. So the filibusters continue, and the conservative base is not only not mobilized, but appears somewhat demoralized.

The other problem is with those voters in the middle to whom Bush and his political team often seem to be gearing their appeal. More and more voters sense there is a cultural divide in the country, and that Bush is on one side and most Democratic elites, including John Kerry, are on the other. This sense of a cultural divide, already evident in the demographics of the 2000 election, has been accentuated by the course of the debate on the war on terrorism, and the invasion of Iraq in particular.

Bush made several distinct arguments for the invasion of Iraq. His unsuccessful attempt to win the backing of the United Nations caused him to give greater emphasis to Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction than would otherwise have been the case. Now that David Kay has concluded the weapons were probably nonexistent by the time of the invasion, it no longer serves much purpose to downplay the moral arguments—the Reaganite arguments—of fighting terrorism not just by destroying weapons, but by replacing terrorist ideas with American democratic values throughout the Middle East and in the larger Islamic world. This includes by necessity the possibility of preemption and regime change. In fact it is these arguments that have the best chance of stimulating and activating the conservative base.

If Howard Dean were heading toward the nomination, Bush might still have had a significant shot at appealing to those voters in the middle. Even voters on the Democratic side of the cultural divide would have considered voting for Bush if they had feared the Democratic candidate was not just liberal, but flaky and unpredictable.

With John Kerry heading for the nomination, that is far less likely. Even Kerry's dullness works to his advantage by making him look thoughtful and competent. A Bush-Kerry matchup can be thought of as shrinking the middle almost to the disappearing point.

In a Bush vs. Kerry race, then, Bush gains nothing from withholding support for a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

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Democrats greatly fear this issue, which is why they feel compelled to state their own belief in heterosexual marriage. On the other hand, Bush doesn't want to say anything that implies intolerance of gays, nor should he. But unless there is a *programmatic* difference between the two parties—namely, support or non-support for a constitutional amendment prohibiting courts from decreeing gay marriage or its equivalent as a constitutional right—Kerry has a good chance of taking the marriage issue completely off the table, even though he is from Massachusetts and voted against the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996.

On the economy, Bush is correct to focus on the future-oriented issue of tax policy. The howls that went up among Democrats when in the State of the Union speech Bush defined the Democratic position as one of future tax increases—including bringing back the hated death tax—show he is in a strong position. Democrats should get used to the idea that they will be described—correctly—as favoring huge tax increases unless they vote to make the 2001-2003 Bush tax cuts permanent.

Saying there are few remaining votes in the middle is not the same thing as saying that we will see a 50-50 election. There is a good chance that Bush's increased use of conservative explanations of conservative positions will do more than stimulate the center-right political base. It might actually win a few votes over to Bush's side of the cultural divide.

Even more likely, it will gain the attention of voters in states like Pennsylvania and Michigan who are already on Bush's side of the cultural war, but had never thought of themselves that way.

The rise of John Kerry, a competent liberal Democrat, means voting alignments will be more purely ideological, not less. In all likelihood, this election will see the culture war become concrete and unavoidable. In that kind of Bush-Kerry debate, the vision of a Bush realignment may well become a reality. ♦

Millionaire Populists

Down and out in Iowa and New Hampshire.

BY FRED BARNES

When John Kerry spoke to a rally after winning the New Hampshire primary, he employed the language of populism. Kerry is well educated, well-to-do, and wedded to an heiress. But in his speech he positioned himself as a champion of the common man. America, he said, doesn't belong to "the privileged." His political career, he insisted, has been dedicated to battling "against powerful interests." And he listed them: "influence peddlers, polluters, HMOs, the drug companies, big oil, and the special interests who now call the White House home." Kerry forgot to mention another frequent target of his attacks, insurance companies.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

John Kerry, populist? It certainly has an inauthentic ring. In Boston, Kerry has a home on fancy Beacon Hill. In Washington, he lives on an estate near Rock Creek Park and belongs to the Democratic establishment (to the extent there is one). As a senator for 19 years, he's advocated mainstream liberalism, not the left-wing populism of fringe figures like Ralph Nader and Jim Hightower. So

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it's easy to conclude Kerry's populism doesn't reflect the essence of the man. It's a pose.

In the presidential race, there's a more important question about his populist pitch: Will it work? It does among educated, upper-middle-class, liberal Democrats, of whom there are many in New Hampshire, and with hard-core Democratic partisans. They're thrilled by it. And it appeals to Democratic political consultants. All these folks know the liberal populism of Kerry and the even more fervent populism of John Edwards is wildly exaggerated. But it's their idea of how to appeal to the horde of voters ranging from lower middle class to poor. "It's an attempt to be empathetic," says Republican strategist Jeffrey Bell. It's also condescending and patronizing. And its record is mixed at best. Populist appeals failed to win the Democratic nomination for Dick Gephardt in 1988 and Bob Kerrey in 1992. Whether Al Gore's embrace of populism ("the people versus the powerful") helped him win the popular vote in 2000 is anybody's guess. I doubt it helped much.

In New Hampshire, you didn't have to look very hard to see the limits of populism, notably in the case of Edwards. In a TV commercial, he summarized his populist message:

> It seems today we have two Americas. With two health care systems, one for the privileged, the other rationed by insurance companies. With two public school systems, one for the haves, one for everybody else. Two governments, one for powerful interests and lobbyists, the other for the rest of us. Two tax systems, where the wealthy corporations pay less, working families pay more.

In his stump speeches, which Edwards repeats word for word at each event, he adds that "two different economies" are dividing America between those families "who never have to worry about a thing" and those who "struggle from paycheck to paycheck." Also in his stump speeches he often introduces his daughter who's "in college." He leaves out that her college is Princeton.

Three nights before the primary, Edwards delivered his populist spiel before a crowd of upscale, activist Democrats in Nashua. All five of the major Democratic candidates gave speeches, but Edwards stole the show. Even Kerry supporters joined in standing and cheering. In Concord two days later, Edwards gave the same speech. As best I could tell, the crowd of 500 or so was made up mostly of undecided voters, independents, and the curious. Their reaction to Edwardian populism was tepid. There was no Edwards surge in the primary. By the way, exit polls suggested Kerry won because of his political experience and perceived electability against President Bush, not his populist rhetoric.

John and Teresa Heinz Kerry

AP/ Jacqueline Roggenbrodt

Why doesn't populism work? For starters, it's pessimistic. It implies that most Americans are helpless. They're oppressed by narrow economic interests that dominate the country and are catered to by Washington. My guess is few voters actually agree with this vision of America. The populism espoused by Kerry and Edwards is mostly substance-free. Does Kerry have a serious plan to reverse the growth of HMOs or eliminate "influence peddlers" in Washington? Not a chance. Edwards's chief solution to the imagined hijacking of America by special interests is to enact mild curbs on lobbyists.

The real problem with the Kerry-Edwards brand of populism is its falsity. America's problems are not caused by corrupt corporate interests and their agents in Washington. As journalist Mickey Kaus has pointed out, it's not drug and insurance companies that make health care so expensive. Drugs are costly because pharmaceutical companies spend so much on research and getting drugs approved. Insurance company profits aren't a major cause of inflation in medical costs. "Demonizing them promotes misunderstanding of the situation," Kaus wrote. "It promotes the illusion that we can have all the drugs and treatments we want without paying much for them if only we eliminate unconscionable profits, if only we abolish what Kerry subtly calls the 'creed of greed.'"

There is a type of populism that is genuine, but liberal Democrats aren't likely to embrace it. This is social, or cultural, populism. It is a conservative populism that has turned southern, border, plains, and Rocky Mountain states into solid Republican turf. It has an ugly side (George Wallace), a controversial side (Alabama judge Roy Moore), and a timely side (opposition to gay marriage). It's mostly associated with traditional values, religious faith, respect for the military, and undiluted patriotism. Country club Republicans have been forced to accept it. Country club Democrats like Kerry can't.

For them, populism will always be a ploy. Kerry adopted a populist line after Howard Dean threatened to run away with the Democratic nomination. Besides Bush, Dean's major demons are "insiders" and special interests in Washington. Soon Kerry had a list of evil forces who are thwarting the aspirations of ordinary Americans. In January, Edwards began giving his "two Americas" speech. He is a multimillionaire, but as a child of the working class and a trial lawyer specializing in medical malpractice cases, he can at least make a case that he's a legitimate populist. Kerry can't. He's a faux populist. ♦

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A "Crisis" Made in Beijing

Taiwan's democracy is not the problem.

BY GARY SCHMITT

ON JANUARY 16, Taiwan's president, Chen Shui-bian, announced the wording of the referendums he intends to put on the ballot in March, when the people of Taiwan go to the polls to elect a president. The referendums will ask whether, in the face of the missile threat from the mainland, Taiwan should purchase more advanced anti-missile weapons, and whether its government should negotiate with the mainland to create a new framework for peaceful and stable relations.

When President Chen first proposed coupling the presidential election with policy referendums, commentators in the United States and abroad accused him of playing politics. In a tight reelection contest with his Kuomintang (KMT) opponent, Lien Chan, Chen was scrambling to change the dynamics of the race. And his strategy worked. Behind in the polls last summer, Chen used the idea of holding various referendums, along with an improving Taiwanese economy, to pull even with Lien and, according to some polls, grab the lead.

But the critics also made a more serious charge: that Chen was playing the demagogue, displaying a reckless willingness to create a crisis in cross-Strait relations and needlessly complicate America's own global statecraft. In fact, Chen's use of the referendum is well within the normal politics of a self-governing people, and the crisis he supposedly engendered is of China's creation.

Gary Schmitt is executive director of the Project for the New American Century.

Taiwan's critics maintain Beijing had softened its rhetoric over Taiwan. But it never softened its actions. China has spent the past year squeezing Taipei internationally—preventing its entry into the World Health Organization, trying to downgrade its status in the World Trade Organization, and routinely frustrating its efforts to play a normal role in regional forums. Nor did Beijing slow its military build-up aimed at Taiwan. On January 13, China even resurrected its threat "to adopt all possible drastic measures, including the use of force," unless concrete progress is made on "reunification." The Bush administration—distracted as it is by other pressing issues, and influenced by a few senior advisers who see Taiwan more as a problem than an asset—has offered a half-hearted response to this bullying.

Not President Chen. Predictably, he responded by reasserting Taiwan's sense of self through the referendums, and reminding the voters that his party, the DDP, strongly favors maintaining Taiwan's self-governing status, in contrast with the KMT, whose history on this point has been less clear. Far from creating a new issue, Chen was appealing to most Taiwanese's sense of themselves as "Taiwanese." Only a dwindling minority see themselves as "Chinese." This accounts for the fact that, as soon as Chen tabled his ideas, the KMT chimed in "Me, too," insisting in speeches that their party would be just as scrupulous as he in protecting Taiwan's sovereignty. It was at this point that Beijing started screaming about the danger of "splittism" in Taiwan and pushing the White House to weigh in on its behalf.

Chen's referendums thus are a useful reminder that the most serious challenge to the status quo in the Strait is China's military build-up. Knowledgeable American military and intelligence analysts no longer assume an easy or certain U.S. victory in the event of a conflict. On the contrary, unless both the United States and Taiwan begin to take this challenge more seriously, at some point in the not so distant future, the only viable policy for avoiding war will be appeasement.

Indeed, a key reason for holding the referendum on the missile threat is to solidify a mandate in Taiwan for enhancing the island's defenses. The fact is, Taiwan's legislature—where the DDP has less than a majority—has been slow to act on needed acquisitions, and Taiwan's military establishment has been somewhat sluggish in responding to the threat, as well.

None of this is particularly surprising given the newness of Taiwan's democracy and the habits of a Taiwanese military used to running its own affairs. Washington should welcome the prospect that the people of Taiwan will send a clear message to their elected representatives and defense establishment on this critical issue.

So far, the White House's reaction to the language of the referendums has been largely positive. If not exactly jumping up and down with enthusiasm, the administration appears to have accepted the referendums as crossing no "red-lines" that would trigger a crisis. For now, then, tensions should ease. But the administration shouldn't kid itself. Getting past the current flap is not the same as coming to terms with its causes. China's ambitions and nationalism are growing, not flagging. And liberal democratic Taiwan increasingly wants—and deserves—a normal role in the world community. Squaring this circle is only going to get harder. ♦

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They Took the Pledge

Whatever became of the term-limiters of '94?

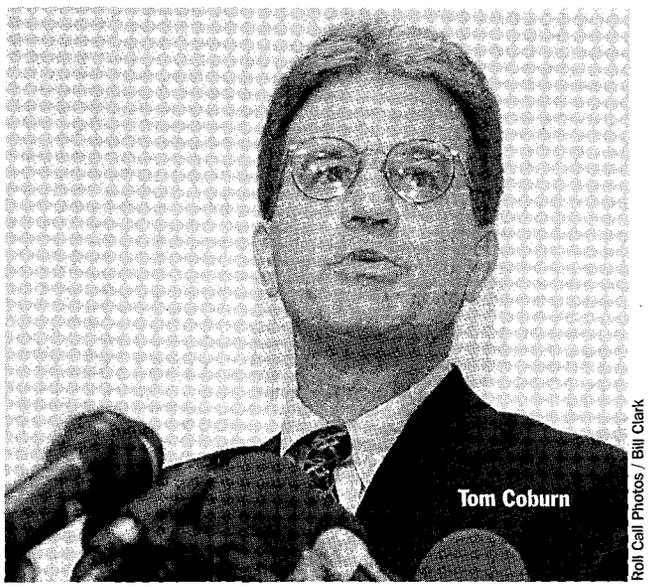
BY KATHERINE MANGU-WARD

THE IMMENSELY POPULAR *Lord of the Rings* movies follow Frodo Baggins on a journey to rid Middle-earth of a ring that is compelling, powerful, and evil. The ring has destroyed countless lives, but each person who possesses it in turn believes himself immune to its malevolent force and is irresistibly tempted to use it for his own ends.

The congressmen who took term-limit pledges must feel some sympathy for Frodo's plight. About a dozen Republican members of the class of '94 pledged to leave Congress after six to ten years because they believe in reducing the size and scope of government and increasing turnover in Washington. Ask those former congressmen today if they're glad they timed themselves out and they'll say all the right things—but they're oddly wistful when they say them.

Washington, they say, is a "fever swamp" one should be "immunized against." It is "corrupting," "debasing," it "causes amnesia about the really important things." Without exception, those who left say they have "no regrets." But once you have been there, a few admit, "there will always be this pull to go back."

Of the 73 freshmen who came in with the Gingrich revolution, half had never previously served in public office. They were a quirky bunch. Mark Sanford refused to take PAC money and slept on a futon in his office. Helen Chenoweth-Hage raised money for her campaign with an endangered-salmon bake. Those who took a term-limit pledge ran as outsiders—some went to such lengths to develop immunity to "Potomac fever" that they became a thorn in the side of Republican leadership.



Tom Coburn

Roll Call Photos / Bill Clark

A few seem to have come out largely unscathed. "Being a member of Congress is a wonderful opportunity. Giving up a job like that, you give up a lot. But now, I get to see my children just about every day" and "lead a quiet and scholarly life," says former congressman Charles Canady. After a stint as general counsel to Governor Jeb Bush, Canady was rewarded with a seat on a state appeals court in Florida. Calling himself "politically neutered," he won't say much about what is happening in the capital these days. Safe in the judiciary, he has "escaped politics," he says, but he "can't escape public life."

For others, however, the lure of Washington proved too strong. Matt Salmon of Arizona says he is "95 percent" sure that he will run when his replacement Jeff Flake's term expires. Salmon says he won't term-limit himself this time around. The rationale behind term limits is flawed, he says, unless they are imposed across the board. He cites the problem of unilateral disarmament: "Guys like me consistently vote to cut spending, and then Ted Kennedy and Senator Byrd stay on and on." Asked about regrets, Salmon is quick to say that "when it came to getting committee assignments it harmed me. When I say harmed me, I mean it harmed my district."

Helen Chenoweth-Hage of Idaho doesn't identify quite so closely with her district. In fact, she doesn't live there anymore. She's busy, "cooking for ranch hands and working with cattle" on the Nevada ranch owned by Wayne Hage, whom she married during her last year in Congress. "Real life," she calls it. But in the midst of an impassioned monologue about the importance of citizen legislators and how glad she is that she term-limited herself, she breaks off to warmly recall the "friendships you form—almost like you were in a battle." She "certainly wouldn't go back" to Washington, though.

Chenoweth-Hage wasn't always chipper about having to pack her bags and go home. In 2000, she said: "I don't regret taking the term-limit pledge, I regret that I signed on for only six years. I think that it takes a while to figure out your new job, and this is a very complicated job. I think that ten to twelve years would probably be a better time."

Paul Jacob, senior fellow at U.S. Term Limits, says Chenoweth-Hage's experience is far from rare. "Most people keep their pledge but wish

Katherine Mangu-Ward is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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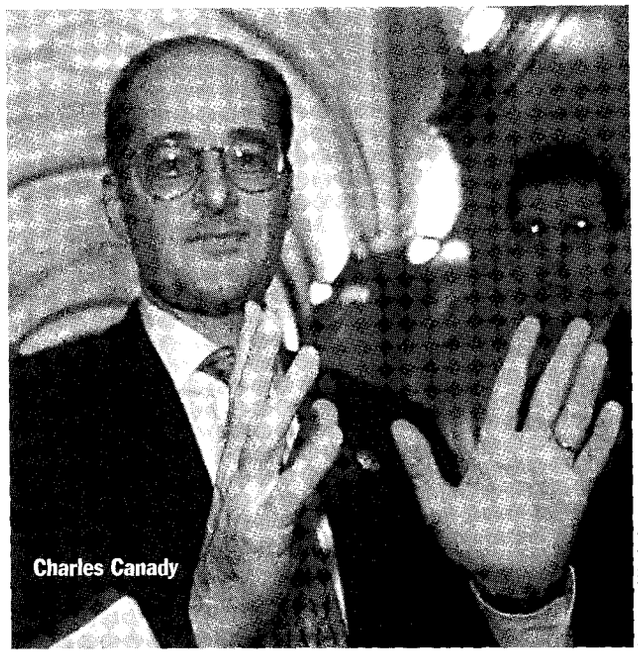

Charles Canady

Reuters / Kevin Lamarque

Mark Sanford

AP / Lou Krasky

they hadn't made it—they come to Washington and they drink the water."

No one has put more thought into the dangers of drinking the water than Tom Coburn of Oklahoma. He continued to practice medicine during his time in Congress—despite being warned off it by the House Ethics Committee—and enjoyed the good publicity that being a doctor and a politician can bring. He often brags that he delivered over 400 babies during his three terms. Medicine, he says, insulated him from the temptation to stay in Washington, where it's "much too easy to lose touch."

After Coburn left Congress, he went back to doctoring. He delivered 216 babies last year. But he also wrote *Breach of Trust: How Washington Turns Outsiders Into Insiders* and founded Americans for Limited Government. A fascination with what goes on inside the Beltway is not yet quite out of his system, apparently.

One of Coburn's closest allies in Congress was Mark Sanford, now firmly ensconced outside the Beltway as the governor of South Carolina. Though united by their disdain for the ceremony and self-importance of Washington legislators, Coburn and Sanford reminisce fondly about their amendment spree on the 1999 agriculture appropriations bill. Coburn devotes a whole chapter in his book to his effort to eliminate pork by using the House equivalent of a filibuster. Sanford, through a slight haze of nostalgia, remembers the 115 amendments Coburn offered as "nearly 200." But this is perhaps forgivable. Both men were in their last term. They were more or less indifferent to what the leadership thought of them. They were simply, says Sanford, trying to "keep the R in Republican." Or as Coburn prefers to put it, "to keep our commitment to the American people." They say they "felt free" for those two years.

Sanford, warming to the subject, says, "Someone told me the other day that the turnover rate in Congress is less than in the Soviet Duma!"

One of the hobbyhorses of the term-limiters is the sticking power of incumbents. Jacob laments that "you can break a pledge, set buildings on fire, do all kinds of terrible things, and still keep your seat." George Radanovich of California recently announced that he would run again, despite a 10-year pledge. And George Nethercutt of Washington—who has long since missed the deadline he set for himself—is living proof that it takes more than a broken term-limit pledge to get booted from a safe seat.

Sanford, warming to the subject, says, "Someone told me the other day that the turnover rate in Congress is less than in the Soviet Duma!" Then he catches himself and sighs, "I don't know if that's true, but I certainly could believe it."

When asked about what might have been, the former congressmen repeat that they have no regrets. They say that the Republican revolution might not have happened if they hadn't won the races where term limits were a divisive issue.

But perhaps more tellingly, they also doubt whether the class of '94 could have carried on being revolutionaries. Human nature being what it is, they say, the old axiom about power corrupting holds true. And while human nature never changes, people do. "If the class of '94 were still in Congress," asks Sanford, "would it still be the class of '94?" ◆

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AWOL in the Battle of Ideas

Why didn't the Bush administration show up in Doha? BY MARC GINSBERG

OVER THE WEEKEND of January 10-13, 300 leaders from the United States and 38 Muslim countries convened in Doha, Qatar, for a "U.S.-Islamic World Forum." Jointly sponsored by the government of Qatar and the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, the forum proved the setting for a vigorous exchange of views. The highlight of the conference: a ringing defense of America's Middle East policy delivered—in the absence of any speaker representing the Bush administration—by former President Bill Clinton.

Muslim and American delegates from the fields of politics, business, civil society, academia, and the news media entered the lion's den of Muslim mythology and resentment toward America, braving stereotypes, confronting conspiracy theories, and defying taboos. Refreshingly, most delegates seemed interested in exploring ways to ease the tensions and find common ground. Intense and candid formal sessions ended in heated discussions spilling out into hallways. In the evenings, participants clustered in every corner of the conference center to argue, cajole, agree, disagree, and exchange email addresses.

Not surprisingly, several Muslims came only to grandstand, harangue, and complain, rather than listen. One Muslim compared the Bush White House to a gang of bin Ladens. During a plenary session, a leading Pakistani journalist, when asked if he would be willing to meet with former Israeli deputy prime minister Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, a cosigner of the Geneva Accords, swore he would never "dialogue with the Jews."

A lively clash occurred between Fox News Channel's Tony Snow and a deputy managing editor of Al Jazeera over coverage of the Middle East in the American and Arab media. Fox is as much a target of derision among Arab elites as Al Jazeera is in the United States, yet Snow's spirited defense of his channel's news coverage and programming was well received. He reminded his audience of the importance of differentiating between news and opinion. Too often, he asserted, Arabs hold the U.S. media to a high standard, but excuse the hyperbole and sensationalism of their own media. He was roundly applauded by a standing-room-only crowd of Muslim leaders, most of whom were meeting an American media personality for the first time.

The climax came when Bill Clinton, attending at the invitation of the emir, took the stage before hundreds of Muslim leaders and millions of Arab television viewers to defend American policies.

But the climax of the conference came in the closing ceremony. Bill Clinton, attending at the invitation of the emir, took the stage before hundreds of Muslim leaders, scores of special guests of the emir, and millions of Arab television viewers to defend American policies in the Middle East. As conservative commentator Ralph Peters would write later in the *New York Post*, Clinton's audience "rose to its feet with evangelical enthusiasm—after being told precisely what they did *not* want to hear by a Scripture-quoting former president."

Warming to his sensitive task, Clinton made four preliminary, overarching observations: "(1) We need to do more to understand how the two major players here understand each other; (2) we need to improve our capacity for self-criticism; (3) we need to identify our common interests; and (4) we need to build the habits of mind and heart necessary to end the habits of demonizing those who are different from us." He then pushed out into territory where few Americans have ventured before an Arab audience.

Clinton pointedly called on the Muslim world to accept its share of the blame for the outbreak of extremism, and scolded Arab leaders for their own abuse of the Palestinians. He chastised Muslims for being too quick to judge America through the pinhole of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He pointed to our own shortcomings as a nation, still striving to build "a more perfect union." He resolutely defended America's friendship with Israel. "America's support for Israel is not rooted in hostility to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians," he said, and he condemned Yasser Arafat for squandering the deal he was offered at Camp David. Moreover, Clinton reminded his audience that President Bush supports the creation of a Palestinian state.

He told his audience that had he

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been president when the September 11 attacks occurred, he would have followed a course identical to that of his successor. He praised President Bush for trying to convince Muslims that America's war on terror is not a war against Islam. And despite all of the baiting during a question and answer session, Clinton never blamed the Bush administration for its many policy missteps. Instead, he called on his audience to join the United States in helping to bring about a "free, independent, stable, and representative government in Iraq."

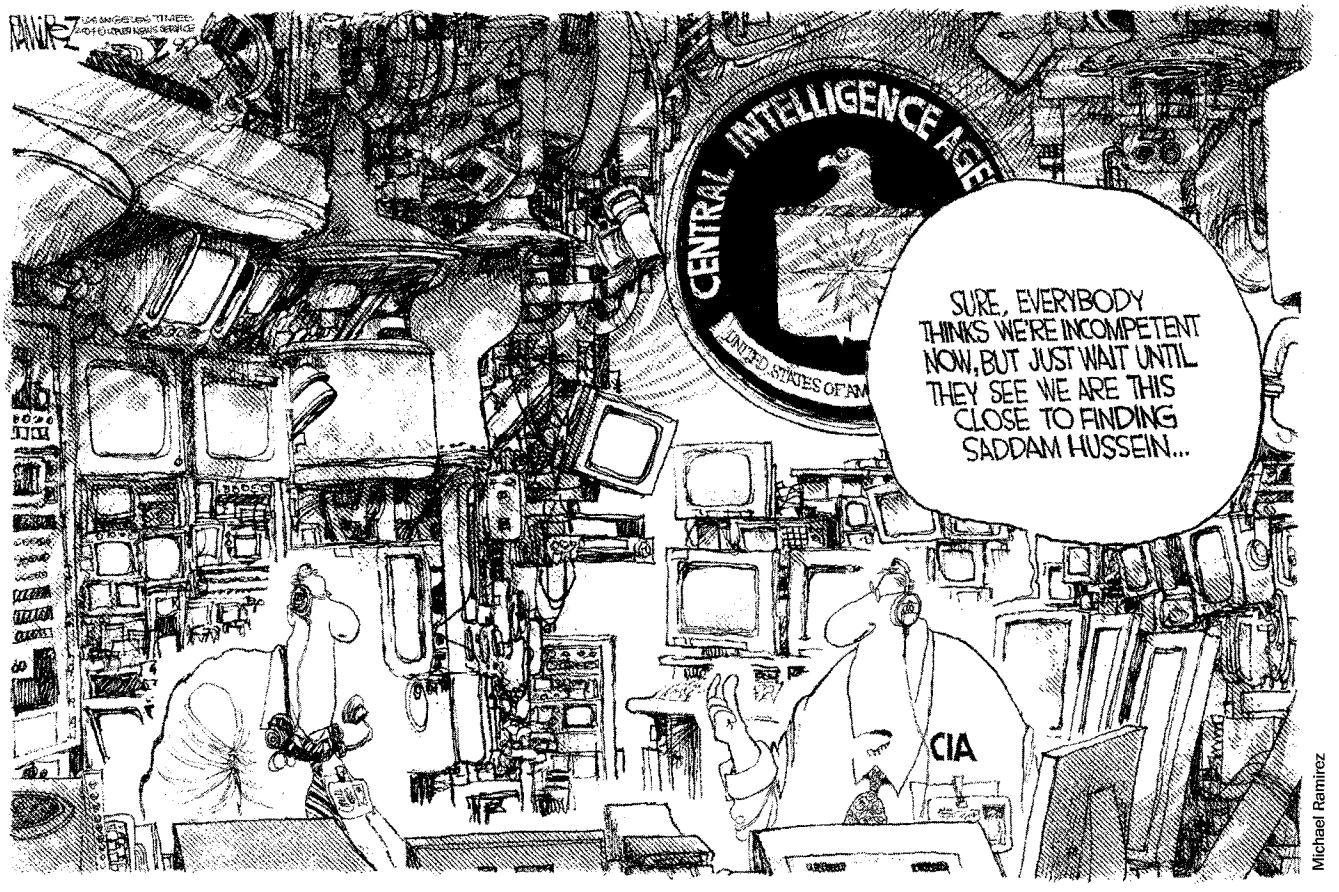
Clinton's speech should be required reading for every Arab and Muslim leader—not to mention all Americans. It turned a defense into the best possible offense: Ralph Peters praised as "almost supernatural" Clinton's sense of what needed to be said and how to say it. "With art and ardor," Peters wrote, "he scolded the crowd that blaming others for their own failings was useless and destructive." It is a message few Americans could deliver to Muslim leaders—to a standing ovation.

At least as notable as Clinton's impressive performance, however, is the embarrassing fact that the administration was AWOL from Doha. Apart from the U.S. ambassador to Qatar and a regional AID officer, no senior representative of the administration attended the forum.

Worse, it appears the administration was scared off by the prospect of sharing the floor with Clinton. No fewer than six senior Bush officials had accepted invitations to the conference and been accorded formal roles—but withdrew after Clinton's attendance was announced on the conference's website. This apparent partisan pettiness is all the more depressing for being self-defeating.

No one has articulated a more far-sighted vision of engagement with the Middle East than President Bush. In November, he outlined a "forward strategy of freedom" aimed at fostering democracies throughout the Muslim world. He acknowledged that "this strategy requires the same persistence and energy and idealism we have shown before."

But for all Bush's sweeping rhetoric, the White House seems to shrink from mounting an intellectual defense of its policies in the region. It shuns Al Jazeera and other Arab media, botches the effort to get a credible Iraqi television station going, and ignores innovative recommendations for reorganizing its public diplomacy. Given the challenges we face in realizing the president's vision, this is the time to rebuild a bipartisan consensus from which to wage a more effective battle of ideas. ♦



Michael Ramirez

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A Trillion Here, a Trillion There...

Going to Mars isn't nearly as expensive as you've heard. BY JAMES OBERG

IT HAS ALREADY BECOME conventional wisdom that President Bush's proposed mission to send a man to Mars will cost a trillion dollars—even many trillions of dollars. At that cost, it's no wonder public support for the White House space vision is wavering. But is that number credible? Where does it come from?

It has certainly been tossed around a lot in the days before and after Bush's January 14 speech. An Associated Press article said that "informal discussions have put the cost of a Mars expedition at nearly $1 trillion." Tom Schatz, president of Citizens Against Government Waste, used the figure in a press release: "While space exploration may be a noble idea, it is not feasible at this time. . . . Cost estimates for the new programs range from $550 billion to $1 trillion." Robert Greenstein, of the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, told *NBC Nightly News*, "We're probably ultimately talking about half a trillion to a trillion dollars from a budget that is already trillions of dollars in deficit." The T-word has since been repeated by countless others.

But looking at the costs in the same way engineers have sized up past space programs suggests the price tag on Bush's proposals will be five to ten times less than these frightening numbers. So why isn't that what the public is hearing?

Space historian Dennis Powell complains: "The most misleading of the arguments is the one having to do with cost. The number being batted around—$1 trillion—was apparently pulled by someone from the thin vacuum of space. It is a made-up number. A fabrication."

Now, it's undeniable that space programs cost money. NASA currently spends about $15 billion a year, and the Defense Department gets $20 billion more for military satellites and rockets. Putting humans on more advanced spaceships—"Project Constellation," as NASA calls the new effort—will cost even more. And of course for many people even the president's recommendation for an additional billion dollars annually for NASA over the next five years is too much. But what kind of number is realistic? Answering this question requires a little history.

This is not the first time people have come up with super-high price tags for a manned mission to Mars. Back in the mid-1960s, a number of scientists, none with direct experience in space-engineering budgets, issued what space workers call SWAGs (scientific wild-ass guesses) on the expected costs of a Mars mission. These were based on strained analogies with what they thought they knew about the Apollo program. For example, in 1965, Dr. D.F. Hornig, science adviser to President Lyndon B. Johnson, told a Senate committee, "If we compare the probable scale and technical difficulties of a manned Mars expedition with Apollo, it is hard to conclude that its probable cost could be much less than perhaps five times that of Apollo—that is, of the order of $100 billion."

Space experts who actually did their homework produced more firmly grounded prices. In 1966, rocket engineer Krafft Ehricke cautioned against extrapolating from the moon mission costs and predicted a "relatively low cost of developing a manned planetary capability" because "many of the preparations are identical with those required to attain a better orbital and lunar capability."

Dr. Charles S. Sheldon II, an unsung genius of space policy analysis in his two decades at the Library of Congress's Congressional Research Service, drew a very similar conclusion in the early 1970s: "If one assumes a [space] program will have other reasons to develop a reusable shuttle, a versatile space tug and a universal space station module (all to serve many Earth orbital economic, military and scientific purposes), then even the total costs of developing a Mars expedition become far different from the kind of $100 billion figure which has been common to the literature.

"People tend to overlook how much of the Apollo costs were associated with building a basic U.S. space capability rather than just going to the moon per se," Sheldon continued. "One might think of a Mars expedition . . . as much closer to the order of magnitude of $10 billion rather than the $25 to $35 billion of Apollo or the $100 billion postulated so often for Mars."

In the years right after the Apollo program, analysts in the British Interplanetary Society, based in London, did their own cost studies for a joint U.S.-Europe man-to-Mars program. Engineer Robert Parkinson reported: "The costs for such an expedition are largely a matter of accounting. . . . If we cost only those items specific to the mission the cost is modest—about $4 billion. . . . Given the right circumstances it is actually cheaper to send men than to try to do the same thing with dozens of robot expeditions."

Obviously, the figures from these discussions of the 1960s and 1970s need to be adjusted for inflation, which is why, for convenience' sake, these and later analysts of Mars costs began speaking in terms of a unit they called "one Apollo." This was the amount spent during the Moon Race.

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It equaled $25 billion in 1970, and adjusted for inflation is now about $100 billion. (Thus to speak of a trillion dollar price tag is to say that a Mars mission will cost ten Apollos.)

At the beginning of the shuttle program, space budget analysts again considered what projects like a mission to Mars might cost. Humboldt Mandell, an economist and space engineer in Houston, argued that sending astronauts to Mars should actually be cheaper than the Apollo program:

> Advances in structural technology will make the structural masses required only a fraction of those estimates in 1960. The weights of the avionics components required to guide and manage so ambitious a flight have been reduced to negligible percentages of their 1960 weights. Even more significantly, the reliabilities required for long duration flights are now attainable within current states of the art in avionics, and at negligible increases in subsystems weights. Other advances in the weights of electrical equipment, motors, relays, and power generating devices have made the planetary vehicles of today's design bear little resemblance to those of the 1960's.

Mandell did the arithmetic and concluded, "Even adding room for cost growth it represents much less than [what was] paid for the first manned lunar landing. In terms of contemporary Gross National Product equivalents, it is only a fraction of what Apollo cost." These conclusions were based on methods that had accurately forecast the price tag of Apollo, and came within 3 percent of estimating the eventual cost of the space shuttle.

Mars costs, as Mandell suggested, can also be considered as a fraction of the economy. As a percentage of today's gross national product, Apollo cost 2.8 percent; he estimated the Shuttle and the man-to-Mars programs would each cost one-sixth that. "We've convinced ourselves that going to Mars is such a tremendous undertaking, that when you see real numbers you tend not to believe them," Mandell said. "The costs of landing men on Mars, by any measure, are only a fraction of those experienced during Apollo."

Experts with track records agree. Returning to the moon with spacecraft capable of extended stays is going to be expensive, but less than half the cost of Apollo. Once those capabilities are bought and paid for, the new vehicles needed for interplanetary flight—and their operating costs—may amount to as much as another "half Apollo." Such estimates jibe with the talk during congressional hearings on January 27 of $170 billion for all the Bush space projects (NASA has as yet offered no precise cost estimates of its own).

These estimates still add up to only a fraction of the "trillion dollar" budgetary bogeyman that opponents of the program are frightening the public with, and they are spread over a period of decades. Compared with what is now being spent on education and health, this is spare change by any proportional consideration, and certainly not the budget buster critics have been claiming.

Someone applied some goofy mathematical spinning to the price of NASA's 1989 wish list to come up with the $1 trillion figure.

So where did the trillion-dollar SWAG come from? Historian Dennis Powell believes the bogus figure "derives from the half-trillion dollars NASA (kicking up its heels in delight) estimated would be the cost of a gold-plated moon base and trip to Mars when George H.W. Bush first proposed it in 1989. Someone, somewhere, applied some goofy mathematical spinning to the price of NASA's 1989 wish list and came up with the $1 trillion figure. It's worth remembering that NASA didn't get its wish list."

David Portree, author of a book describing NASA's many different plans for Mars, quotes Humboldt Mandell as explaining that this 1989 plan "was over-costed by a considerable amount." The original estimates included a 55 percent reserve. The cost of a permanent moon base in that 1989 plan, including the 55 percent "cushion," would have been $100 billion in 1991 dollars between 1991 and 2001. The Mars expedition would have cost an additional $158 billion between 1991 and 2016 based on the same stipulations. Thus, a return to the moon to stay and a mission to Mars would have cost a total of $258 billion, of which 55 percent ($141 billion) was cushion and $117 billion was the expected actual cost.

And even that was "gold plated." As with previous studies, Portree explained, this team "opted for a 'brute-force' approach to piloted Mars exploration requiring such big-ticket items as heavy-lift rockets that dwarfed the old Saturn V, nuclear-thermal propulsion, and a lunar outpost."

But this approach never gained much support. Indeed, "proposing it repeatedly over the past 30 years has succeeded mainly in ingraining the belief that Mars exploration must be exorbitantly expensive," Portree concluded.

These perceptions have clearly not been expunged. And the current wild estimates may already be serving their political purpose. "Once the inaccurate numbers are out there, they can do damage," notes Dr. Dwayne Day, a Washington-based space policy analyst and former investigator on the Columbia accident investigation board. "Now many members of the American public believe that a moon base will cost a trillion dollars.

"Reporters influence the political debate, and by being sloppy in their job they can change policy in ways that are unfair," he continued, in a comment recently distributed over an Internet forum. "The possibility of the White House pursuing a lunar base program may have suffered real harm because some reporters used bad sources with bad information." ♦

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The Many Faces of John Kerry

His record offers several avenues for GOP attack. Or does it?

By Matthew Continetti

Let's say you're a Republican strategist. It's around 10 P.M. on Tuesday, January 26, and you're watching Senator John Kerry, Democrat from Massachusetts, deliver his valedictory speech to supporters in Manchester, New Hampshire. Kerry has just been declared the winner in the New Hampshire primary. A week earlier, he won the Iowa caucuses. You remember that no Democratic presidential candidate who won back-to-back victories in Iowa and New Hampshire has ever lost his party's nomination. Kerry, you realize, is now the Democratic frontrunner. By a million miles.

For six months, Republicans have anticipated running against former Vermont governor Howard Dean. They couldn't wait to attack Dean's antiwar stance, his call for total repeal of the Bush tax cuts, his secularism, and his temperament. They had their clever cable-TV soundbites at the ready: Dean was George McGovern and Walter Mondale all rolled into one angry politician.

But what will they say about Kerry? Watching Kerry speak to his supporters, one has to concede he looks presidential. His baritone conveys gravitas. He sounds eager to defend his 19-year record as a senator. His supporters sound eager, too: When Kerry tells them that he has "only begun to fight," they break out into a chant of "Bring It On! Bring It On!" The chant has become a Kerry slogan, a sort of shorthand used to describe the belief among Kerry supporters—and, apparently, among Democratic primary voters and caucus-goers—that the senator is the only Democrat who can stand toe-to-toe with President Bush.

Ed Gillespie, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, is in the business of proving them wrong. Addressing an audience at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Arlington, Virginia, a few days before the New Hampshire primary, he laid out a plan for dealing with the new Democratic frontrunner.

"Kerry," Gillespie said, is "one of the most liberal members of the Senate." More so, in fact, than the senior senator from Massachusetts: "Americans for Democratic Action—the premier liberal rating organization—puts [Kerry's] lifetime rating at 93 percent," Gillespie noted. "Senator [Edward M.] Kennedy has a lifetime rating of 88 percent—five points less."

Gillespie paused. "Who would have guessed it?" he asked. "Ted Kennedy is the conservative senator from Massachusetts!"

Gillespie's joke got a lot of laughs. But was it an accurate assessment of Kerry's vulnerabilities? Will Republicans have no trouble portraying the senator as a Massachusetts liberal? As soft on national security? As an aloof aristocrat? Republican strategists say Kerry is vulnerable in four areas—his antiwar activity 33 years ago, his record on taxes, his record on national security, and his social liberalism. Let's see how the newly anointed Democratic frontrunner measures up.

Vietnam. Kerry campaign staffers are confident the senator's service in Vietnam inoculates him from charges that he is "soft" on national security. Maybe. Of course, Kerry's heroism during the Vietnam War is well-established. In 1969, as the captain of a Swift boat, the future senator ferried U.S. soldiers across the waters of the Mekong Delta. He served bravely. One of the war stories you hear a lot is how Kerry saved the life of a Green Beret named Jim Rassman, who went overboard during a gunfight. These days Rassman, a registered Republican, stumps for Kerry. "I'm switching registration to vote for John Kerry," Rassman tells campaign audiences.

Kerry was wounded three times in Vietnam. He was awarded three Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star, and a Silver Star. But it's what happened after he came back to the

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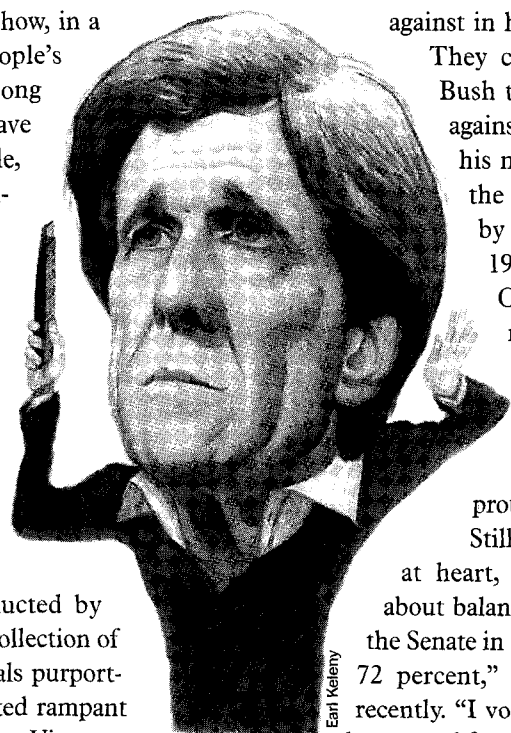
United States that Republican strategists see as a potential vulnerability. In 1971, Kerry became involved in Vietnam Veterans Against the War, an antiwar group with ties to "Hanoi Jane" Fonda. Kerry served as the group's spokesman, marched on the Capitol, and testified before Congress. His role in Vietnam Veterans Against the War made him famous and, to some, infamous. The Nixon administration had a file on Kerry.

Kerry has said that the antiwar movement was a "movement of conscience." He has said that he was "proud" to have marched on the Capitol in 1971. But he will still have to answer questions about his antiwar activities. For many years, critics have derided Kerry for what they saw as his opportunistic involvement with the antiwar movement. They love to recount how, in a famous episode, Kerry threw other people's medals onto the Capitol steps in 1971, along with ribbons of his own. New criticisms have surfaced in the last few weeks. For example, Ed Gillespie told the audience at the Conservative Political Action Conference that during the famous 1971 protest, "accounts of that . . . demonstration had [Kerry] staying in a friend's Georgetown townhouse while the masses stayed in tents."

Last week, a weightier criticism of Kerry's antiwar activity was made by the military historian Mackubin Thomas Owens. Owens penned an article in which he called attention to Kerry's involvement in the "Winter Soldier Investigation." The investigation, conducted by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, was a collection of interviews with, writes Owens, "individuals purporting to be Vietnam veterans," who recounted rampant atrocities committed by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. Placed in the Congressional Record by Sen. Mark Hatfield, the Winter Soldier Investigation was considered so extreme that even critics of the war like Neil Sheehan and James Reston disputed its more outrageous claims. For Kerry, however, the investigation was the basis of his critique of the Vietnam conflict and a centerpiece of his 1971 testimony before Congress. He has never disavowed it.

Will any of this make a difference if Kerry is the Democratic nominee? Probably not. Peter D. Feaver, a political scientist at Duke University and a contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, says that Kerry—a Vietnam veteran who looks back at the war as a mistake—represents "broad cultural trends." Feaver points out that if you ask Americans whether the United States should have stayed out of Vietnam, as the *New York Times* did in 2000, 60 percent say yes. Only 24 percent say the United States did the right thing. "The people who would be bothered by Kerry's antiwar activism," Feaver concludes, "are already going to vote for Bush."


Earl Keleny

TAXES. In November 2003, Jim Jordan, John Kerry's departing campaign manager, sent a memo to his replacement, Mary Beth Cahill. The memo, which was leaked to ABC News, provides an insider's look at the Kerry campaign. "You'll be tempted to ask the research shop to get you a memo on The Candidate's achievements in Congress," Jordan wrote. "Save yourself some time and don't."

Maybe Jordan was trying to avoid talking about Kerry's record on taxes. Republican strategists giddily recite the list of all the tax cuts Kerry has voted against in his 19 years in the U.S. Senate. They cite Kerry's votes against the Bush tax cuts in 2001. And his vote against the Bush tax cut in 2003. And his many votes against eliminating the marriage penalty—at least 12 by one count. And the fact that in 1993, he voted twice for President Clinton's budget plan, which raised taxes by $240 billion. And the fact that, in 1996, after he voted to raise gasoline taxes, Kerry told the *Boston Globe* he was "very proud" of the vote.

Still, Kerry insists he is a tax cutter at heart, but one seriously concerned about balanced budgets. "When I came to the Senate in 1985, the highest rate of tax was 72 percent," he told Fox's Chris Wallace recently. "I voted to lower it to 28 percent. I have voted for capital gains tax cuts. I voted for incentives for businesses to grow." All true.

These days, Kerry is running on a tax increase for the wealthy—specifically, individuals making more than $200,000 a year; he would leave intact the Bush tax cuts for people who make less. He seems eager to debate the president on the issue, which he will use to portray himself as a fiscal conservative. Debating tax cuts is "a fight we deserve to have in this country," he told the *Washington Post*. "That's a fight we will win."

NATIONAL SECURITY. Kerry wants to combat the idea that Democrats are soft on national security. "I not only welcome that fight, I relish it," he told *Newsweek* recently. "If that's what they want, then I say to them, 'Bring it on!'"

GOP chairman Gillespie has obliged on that point, too,

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in a recent address to the Republican National Committee. Gillespie named vote after vote in which Kerry sought to cut the nation's defense budget. The list is exhaustive, and exhausting. There's the 1991 vote to cut the Defense Department by $3 billion; the 1992 vote to cut an additional $6 billion; the 1993 vote against a military pay raise; the 1995 vote to freeze defense spending for seven years; the votes against the B-2 bomber, the Apache helicopter, the Patriot missile, the F-15 fighter . . . you get the idea.

Of course, Kerry wasn't the only senator to vote for decreases in the defense budget during the 1990s. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, slashing defense appropriations became a bipartisan activity—a fact that Republicans will ignore during the upcoming campaign.

But Kerry may have more trouble explaining his positions on two other national security issues. The first is intelligence. In 1995, he voted to cut $80 million from the FBI's budget. Also in 1995, he introduced a bill that would have reduced the overall intelligence budget by $1.5 billion by the year 2000. The bill, which never came to a vote, was similar to one Kerry proposed in 1994. The 1994 bill would have cut $1 billion from the budgets of the National Foreign Intelligence Program and from the Tactical Intelligence Program, and while it didn't come to a vote, either, Kerry submitted the language in another appropriations bill—only to see it defeated.

Kerry has said that these votes and proposals were attempts to "change the culture of our intelligence gathering." Soon after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, however, Kerry *complained* about the lack of funds the intelligence establishment received. "And the tragedy is," Kerry told Bob Schieffer on CBS's *Face the Nation* in September 2001, "at the moment, the single most important weapon for the United States of America is intelligence. It's the single most important weapon in this particular war."

So why did he vote to cut intelligence appropriations over the last decade? Kerry's campaign didn't return calls for comment.

The other issue that may cause Kerry trouble is Iraq. In 1991, Kerry joined most of his fellow Democratic senators in voting against the Gulf War. At the time, he said he did not want to see U.S. soldiers die unless it was absolutely necessary. In a speech delivered on the Senate floor, he asked, "Is the liberation of Kuwait so imperative that all those risks are worthwhile at this moment?" Then he used a phrase that he would recycle 11 years later: "There is a rush to war here. We are willing to act, it seems, with more bravado than patience."

In 1998, after Kerry voiced support for Operation Desert Fox, in which the United States and Britain bombed Iraq for three days, Kerry was asked whether he had cast the wrong vote in 1991. "My speech on the floor of the Senate [in 1991] could not have been clearer about my support for military force," he said. Then why, exactly, had he voted against the 1991 war? Again, Kerry wouldn't say.

The truth is, Kerry's votes on Iraq over the last ten years have been wildly inconsistent: He voted against war in 1991, for war in 2002, and then against the $87 billion appropriation for reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2003. What will happen, asks Peter Feaver, when Republicans ask Kerry, "Tell me the conditions under which you will use force?" It's a question for which the candidate doesn't seem to have a coherent answer.

The L-Word. Since 1980, four Massachusetts Democrats—Edward Kennedy, Michael Dukakis, Paul Tsongas, and John Kerry—have run for president of the United States. So far, three have lost. Will Kerry, the fourth, be able to break the pattern?

Not if Republicans successfully label Kerry a "Massachusetts liberal." When you mention Kerry's name, Republican strategists like to talk about Dukakis, for whom Kerry served as lieutenant governor. They talk about how, when Kerry was first elected lieutenant governor, in 1982, Dukakis was considered the more moderate politician. They talk about Massachusetts's notorious prison furloughs (even for murderers sentenced to life without parole), which Kerry, like Dukakis, supported.

They talk about Kerry's voting record in the Senate. Kerry has voted six times against banning partial-birth abortion. He's voted against requiring parental notification for minors who want an abortion. He voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. He voted against a bill that would have withheld federal funds from schools that prohibited the Boy Scouts of America from using their facilities.

Kerry's record on social issues could be what leaves him most vulnerable to Republican attacks. Take his position on abortion, which has evolved over the years. When he first ran for Congress in 1972, Kerry said he thought abortion was "for the states to decide." No longer. When Howard Dean attacked Kerry's record on abortion rights in late January, Kerry responded by saying that he was the only Democratic presidential candidate who hadn't "played games" on the issue. "If you believe that choice is a constitutional right, and I do," Kerry said, "and if you believe that *Roe* v. *Wade* is the embodiment of that right . . . I will not appoint a justice to the Supreme Court of the United States who will undo that right."

Kerry's position on the death penalty has also evolved. For years, Kerry opposed capital punishment in all cases. In 1996, during a debate with Massachusetts governor William Weld, who was challenging Kerry for his Senate

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seat, Kerry said Weld's support of capital punishment for terrorists "would amount to a terrorist protection policy." Kerry's position, on the other hand, "would put them in jail." Six years later, in 2002, Kerry changed his mind. He told NBC's Tim Russert, "I am for the death penalty for terrorists because terrorists have declared war on your country." Kerry still opposed the death penalty "in the criminal justice system," he told Russert, "because I think it's applied unfairly."

When it comes to gay marriage, Kerry has tried to square the circle. He voted against the Defense of Marriage Act but insists he's against gay marriage nonetheless. Why did he vote against DOMA? "I . . . don't support the United States Senate being used for gay bashing," he told Fox's Chris Wallace, "for, sort of, discriminatory efforts to try to drive wedges between the American people."

Will the Republican strategy of labeling Kerry a Massachusetts liberal have traction? After all, Kerry voted for welfare reform in 1996. He voted to balance the budget on several occasions. He's questioned the Democrats' allegiance to teachers' unions and affirmative action, only to back off. "I don't think being from Massachusetts is a political asset," says Alan Brinkley, the Columbia historian. "But is it a huge liability? I'm not sure." Brinkley says that Boston doesn't quite have the same cultural resonance as a bastion of liberalism that, say, San Francisco does.

"The question is," says one Democratic strategist, "Will these attacks stick?" Kerry, this strategist says, won't be as easily caricatured as Al Gore. Gore's campaign let the media paint a picture of him as wooden and prone to fabrications. Kerry's people, says the strategist, are "too smart to let that happen again."

Others agree. "One of the things the Kerry campaign will be good at," says Peter Fenn, a Democratic consultant, "is saying, 'Look at the whole record.' You're not talking here about somebody who could be classified as a knee-jerk ideologue."

"Does he have as strong a firewall" against being labeled a liberal "as, say, Lieberman does?" Fenn asks. "Maybe not. Is it enough to beat George Bush? Absolutely." ♦

Back to 1984

Are we about to replay the Reagan-Mondale election?

By Noemie Emery

Close your eyes on some days, and you can almost believe it: You're back somewhere in the mid-1980s, 1984 to be precise. At least from the Democrats' side of the aisle. There it all is: The Republican president denounced as a dunce and a dangerous cowboy; the left on a tear against corporations and tax cuts; and the vast, murky war against a dangerous enemy, which Republicans think of as a crusade against evil and Democrats think is a sham. Magically, the three intervening elections—1992, 1996, and 2000—appear to have vanished, as have their protagonists: Bill Clinton is gone, as is the George W. Bush of 2000, gone in the moment he learned, on live cameras, that tower number two had been hit. We are back now in Reagan country, with deep divisions, big issues, deep feelings, big wars. And quite a few things are familiar. This is the way they equate.

1. The President. Now, as in those days, there is a Republican president, a man of the West, detested in Europe and deeply despised by the base of the Democrats, who are driven to distraction by his mere presence. He is looked down on by them as a dupe or dullard, and portrayed, as Richard Wirthlin, Reagan's favorite pollster, once put it, as "dumb, dangerous, and a distorter of facts." Reagan was described also, by professional crony Clark Clifford, as an "amiable dunce." Bush should be so fortunate as to have the word *amiable* invoked in this way by his foes. Instead, he is widely regarded by liberals as swaggering, arrogant, clueless, vindictive, and *mean*. Opinion differs as to whether he is an evil political mastermind, surrounded by similar knaves and connivers, or merely an empty suit dressed up and guided by others (in which case the "evil genius" description is used to describe his counselor Karl Rove).

Despite all of this, or perhaps owing to it, Bush is

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nonetheless liked by the rest of the country, which gives him high marks for his leaderly qualities. Leadership and national security are his best issues. His weakest one seems to be the environment. Although his beloved ranch is run on the greenest of principles, the greens turn him down three to one. Repeatedly, they claim he has poisoned the air, poisoned the water, and is feeding small children a diet of arsenic. For these reasons, and others, they long to destroy him, and are united with the rest of the left in this great cause. "Ronald Reagan has provided all the unity we need," Gary Hart said at the 1984 Democratic convention. "Not one of us is going to sit this campaign out. You have made the stakes too high." But not high enough to impress most Americans, who remained less than outraged by the president.

Deep tranches of rage did not produce general anger with Reagan. Thus far, they have failed to do so with Bush.

2. Populist Outrage. And you thought "two Americas" was a new theme dreamed up by John Edwards? Not quite. "We're becoming two Americas—one for the thin veneer of the wealthiest, who are doing better and better, and the other for the rest of America, who are doing less and less well." This was Walter Mondale, in early January 1984. He wasn't the only one who held these opinions. "The greatest collection of special interests in all American history had now assembled inside the cold citadel of privilege known as the Republican party," Ted Kennedy thundered at the party's convention. And there was the keynote address of Mario Cuomo, disputing the Reagan description of this country as a "shining city on a hill." "There's another city, another part of the city, the part where some people can't pay their mortgages, and most young people can't afford one, where students can't afford the education they need and middle-class parents watch the dreams they hold for their children evaporate. . . . In this part of the city, there are more poor than ever, more families in trouble . . . there is despair, Mr. President, in the faces that you don't see."

In 1982, there were mass demonstrations in Europe against Reagan's deployment of Pershing missiles. In 2002 there were mass demonstrations against Bush's war in Iraq.

Cuomo delivered this speech to the convention when he had been governor of New York for something under two years. By the time he was voted out of office a decade later, his policies had reduced much of New York to a state of depression, with high tax rates driving out businesses, and the poor folk he spoke of more wretched than ever. But in 1982, as in 2002, the country had been rocked by recession, leading the Democrats to hope they could run on the economy, a hope that dwindled in the following year as the markets recovered, leaving the Democrats to focus on ever-shrinking pockets of failure, telling people they were not as well-off as they felt. Al Gore tried a similar tack in the 2000 election (before there had even been a recession), trying to run as the de facto incumbent telling people that "powerful forces" were working against them, while they never had it so good. This is one problem with a populist spin in a relatively open society, in which most people manage to live pretty well. Another problem is that of the three populists of 2004, two (Howard Dean and John Kerry) come from money and privilege, and the third, John Edwards, made himself a millionaire many times over. Kerry's second wife has a personal fortune of more than $500 million. "Powerful forces" do not seem to work much against them.

3. Foreign Affairs. Foreign policy is a third point of contact in which a déjà vu sense emerges. The Republican president says we are facing an evil and sinister conspiracy that poses a threat to the world and the nation. The Democrats say that the scope of the threat is uncertain, the assertion of "evil" unwise and insulting. The president claims his assertive behavior has gone a long way to make the world safer. The Democrats claim he has made it more dangerous. In 1982, there were mass demonstrations in Europe against Reagan's deployment of Pershing missiles on the continent. In 2002 and 2003 there were mass demonstrations in Europe against Bush's war in Iraq. In both instances, Democrats tended to sympathize with the protests and blamed the president for driving our "allies" away.

Democrats also have revived the idea that the president is an arrogant, ignorant ideologue, out of his league in the world of diplomacy. "When the globe is a tinderbox, we need a president who knows what he's doing. We need a president who sees the world as it is, in all of its subtleties, its complexities, its dangers and its potential; who has been tested by experience, who has read and remembered history . . . who sees force as a last and not as a first resort." No, this is not John Kerry (or Wesley Clark) in this campaign season. It is Walter Mondale, back in 1984. "He goes on to make the case for a more sophisticated way of dealing with the Soviet Union," said Elizabeth Drew, then with the *New Yorker*.

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"He calls for a 'strong defense,' but says 'I refuse to support Mr. Reagan's incoherent program, or sign Mr. (Caspar) Weinberger's blank check.'" John Kerry and John Edwards likewise refused to hand a "blank check" to George W. Bush. In 1984, the most critical ad of the year was the "Bear in the Woods," run by the Reagan team, about the threat of the Soviet Union: "There is a bear in the woods. For some people the bear is easy to see. Others don't see it at all. Some people say the bear is tame. Others say it's vicious. And dangerous. Since no one can really be sure who is right, isn't it smart to be as strong as the bear? If there is a bear." In 1984, Americans chose to retain their armed sentry. In late 2003, after Bush had invaded Iraq, in part because it refused to divulge what had become of its chemical weapons, Libya announced it now planned to disarm peaceably. Three years after Reagan left office, with nary a shot being fired, the Soviet Union dissolved.

Having had no success 20 years ago against Reagan, the Democrats haven't learned much. They called him a dunce, and he has steadily risen in the eyes of historians; they called him a warmonger, and he ended the Cold War; they called him a plutocrat who would cause a depression, and he set off a 20-year boom. But in response they have dug the hole deeper: They have not only retreated past President Clinton; they have gone back before Gary Hart. At least in 1984, there was one voice and one wing of the party making a strong case that it ought to try new approaches, and shake off its tired ideas. But these tired ideas—that markets are bad, and that strength causes problems—are being embraced now more fervently than ever; the freshest new face among the contenders this year is spouting the weariest rants. And with less reason than ever: No one knew then that the Cold War would end as it did, or that tax cuts would really ignite economic growth. Or that the class struggle, as the populists phrase it, would evolve quite the way that it has.

There can be no campaigns run on the theme of American mornings while there are orange alerts, bombers in Baghdad, and the prospect of bombs in American cities.

In his 1991 book *Our Country*, Michael Barone explains the failure of the populist campaigns against Reagan and George Bush the elder by the fact that the anticorporate claims of the days of the Roosevelts had much less salience in the labor market of the late 20th century, with its large numbers of mobile and flexible workers, growth in small businesses, and wage earners who also own stock. And this was before the stock market exploded in the mid-1990s, drawing more and more Middle Americans into its arms. In 2002, fifty-two percent of Americans held stock equity holdings; and 29 percent of these owned $1,000 or more. Talk about pitting "workers" against "corporations" does not account for the workers who co-own corporations, and therefore make money when corporate profits rise. It is perfectly true that George W. Bush tries to help corporations, but not so that his rich friends can buy more playthings. He wants businesses to churn out more jobs and more money, and thereby to make millions more people rich. Left-wing publications and politicians love to portray the president as a plutocrats' stooge from the days of McKinley, helping the bosses plant their boots on the necks of the people. Actually, he is something quite different: a corporate-populist, trying to help more and more workers invest in corporations, and benefit thus from their wealth.

Can Bush, then, recreate the Reagan triumph of 1984? More than in any campaign that one can remember, his fate may not be in his own hands. No president who starts his days reading a terrorist threat assessment can project a true aura of Reaganesque sunniness. There can be no campaigns run on the theme of American mornings while there are orange alerts, bombers in Baghdad, and the prospect of bombs, germs, or gas in American cities. Bush dare not dwell on his biggest success—the fact that there have been no new attacks on American soil—for fear that a big one may hit us tomorrow. Nor can he look for a stable political climate. An unforeseen turn in the war on terror could alter the race overnight.

Nonetheless, his foes now appear eager to help him, returning over and over to oldies but baddies that failed to gain a mass audience the first 18 times they were played. A veteran from a war of the late 1960s, backed by a singer (Carole King) from the late 1970s, nominee-in-waiting John Kerry can't get the 1980s out of his mind. He has recently taken to ending his speeches by saying that, along with opposing "Nixon's war" in Vietnam, he also fought against Reagan's "illegal" wars in Central America, and Iran-contra, and Oliver North.

Oliver North! There's a rallying cry to get the troops moving! And so they beat on, as F. Scott Fitzgerald might put it, "boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." ♦

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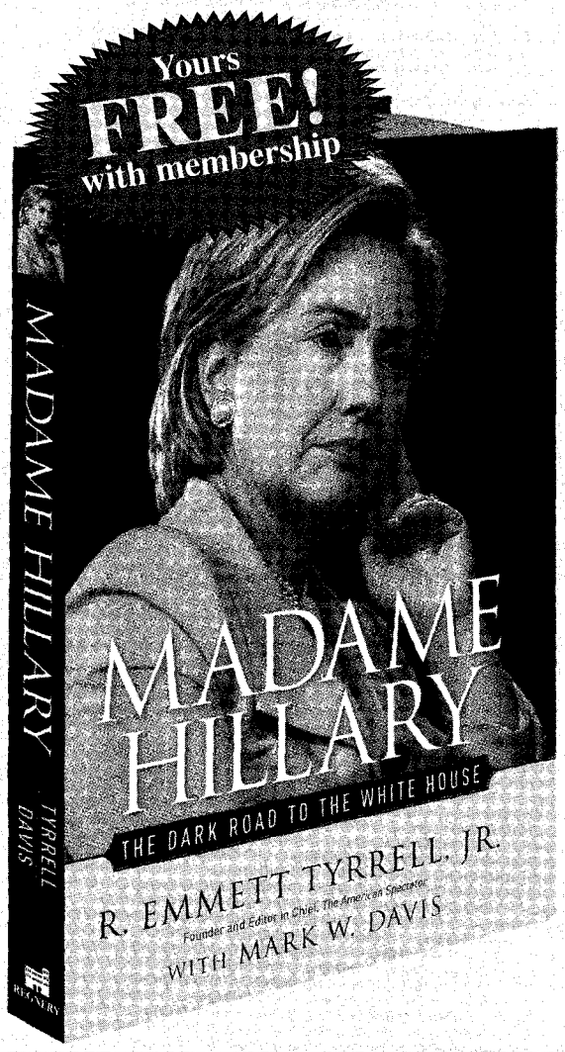
HILLARY: Dishonest, Grasping, and Corrupt

And, She's Going to Do Everything She Can to Become President



"THIS IS A WOMAN WHO'S BEEN FIRST LADY, WHO'S LIVED IN THE White House and shared power with a president," says one of Hillary's fellow Senators. "Her ambition is not the Senate leadership.... It's obvious she has a much greater goal in mind. Her ambition is the White House, with all the moves to prepare the way." Now, R. Emmett Tyrrell and Mark Davis reveal in ***Madame Hillary: The Dark Road to the White House*** that not only is Hillary determined to be President: she has the power, the influence, and the determination to attain that goal.

Tyrrell and Davis detail her plans to capture the presidency — with help from the liberal media establishment, which continues to treat her adoringly and ignore uncomfortable questions about her record. With an insider's access to Hillary's Senate colleagues and other key players, they examine in detail several strategies she may use to win. They also explain how she distorts the Clinton administration's sorry record in order to position herself for her own run for the Oval Office, forecasts the damage that a President Hillary might inflict upon the nation — and best of all, shows how she can be stopped.

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Arms and the Man

John Kerry in Vietnam

By ANDREW FERGUSON

William Morrow

According to the publisher's press release, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War*, by Douglas Brinkley, "was never intended as a political biography"—meaning, I suppose, that it is not meant to be confused with those ghost-written, election-year puffers and potboilers under whose weight the remainder-tables of America's bookstores are already beginning to buckle and break. *Tour of Duty* is intended to be a real book that makes an enduring contribution to the national letters—akin to the moving and beautifully written *Faith of My Fathers*, by John McCain and Mark Salter, rather than *A Charge to Keep*, by George W. Bush and Karen Hughes, which was, lucky for them, forgotten within weeks of its publication in 1999. Among this year's campaign books, the story told by *Tour of Duty* is more compelling than *Four Trials*, by John Edwards; it has much less bombast than Howard Dean's *Winning Back America*, and none of the dullsville policy chatter of *An Even Better Place: America in the 21st Century* by Richard Gephardt, RIP. And unlike, say, Al Sharpton's *Al on America*, it sheds light on the life of a presidential candidate who is not a boob.

Also, the author of *Tour of Duty* is no skulking ghostwriter but a figure in his own right. Douglas Brinkley has written, among much else, books about Franklin Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter, and John Kennedy. These, along with his fondness for the television camera and the op-ed page, make Brinkley an exemplar of what is called the "presidential historian"—a recently minted job title that denotes writers of popular biographies who have a special fascination with American presidents and politicians. Michael Beschloss, Robert Dallek, and Doris Kearns Goodwin are among the more familiar brand-names. Their granddaddy is Arthur Schlesinger Jr., famed chronicler of the Kennedy clan. Like Schlesinger, these new presidential historians often write well, with a special talent for brisk and colorful narratives, and as with Schlesinger, their relations with academic history grow more tenuous with each published book. Though Brinkley is himself director of the Eisenhower Center at the University of New Orleans, you are much more likely to find a presidential historian lecturing from behind a desk at Jim Lehrer U. or Charlie Rose Tech than from the podium of a classroom filled with real students.

Tour of Duty
John Kerry and the Vietnam War
by Douglas Brinkley
William Morrow, 546 pp., $25.95

Another common attribute of the presidential historian is toadyism—an admiration for his subject that sooner or later puddles into sycophancy, especially if the subject has agreeable politics. Here again, Schlesinger showed the way, though Beschloss, Dallek, and the others seem intent on outdoing even the author of *Robert Kennedy and His Times* in their willingness to glorify their subjects. Brinkley must be aware of the danger. At several different points in *Tour of Duty* he asserts that this is his book, not Kerry's; the clear implication is that it is a work of cold-eyed history rather than political advocacy or personal puffery. The bulk of the book involves long, detailed accounts of Kerry's adventures as commander of a "Swift boat" during the Vietnam war. "The narrative is based largely on journals and correspondence Kerry kept while on his tours of duty," Brinkley writes at the book's opening. "He, however, exerted *no* editorial control on the manuscript."

And what do you know? He didn't need to. (The italics on that *no*, by the way, are Brinkley's.) John Kerry himself couldn't have written a more admiring book about John Kerry. Even a modern presidential candidate might think twice before writing a sentence like this about himself: "Looking into the faces of the Vietnamese peasants he encountered, a wave of compassion shot through John Kerry." Kerry knew what he was getting with Brinkley. In

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Kerry at Yale

William Morrow

his acknowledgments, at the book's close, Brinkley stresses again his editorial independence. "Kerry wished that the story of what the Swift boats did in Vietnam was better known," Brinkley writes, "*and toward that end* granted me permission to quote from what he collectively called his 'War Notes' with only one string attached: that I write any book or article drawn from them within two years."

This time the italics are mine. If Kerry's true purpose was to spread the word about the history of Swift boats in Vietnam, correcting an oversight in the historical record, you can't help but wonder why he required the author to finish the book in two years. As it happens, Brinkley began his work in 2002, which meant that it would have to be finished by . . . oh. And sure enough, the book arrived in bookstores two weeks before the Iowa caucuses. You don't suppose the senator had some other purpose in mind?

No one who reads it will doubt that *Tour of Duty* was published in haste. It's hard to believe that Brinkley would write this badly if Kerry had allowed him to work a while longer—through one more election cycle at least. Some passages are merely inept, though partially comprehensible: "Chicago still stood as America's most American city: its Italian pizzerias and German beer halls, side by side with its Jewish synagogues, Polish bakeries, African-American churches, and all the other savory ingredients in that windy microcosm of this nation's boiling melting pot." Other passages are just baloney: "As it did for so many Americans of his generation, John Kerry's youth came to a cruel end on November 22, 1963." And some passages, no matter how often you read them, will never make sense, as when Kerry visits San Francisco during the Summer of Love: "Anarchy was in the air; spelling 'Amerika' and putting Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* of Communist precepts in vogue. It was stylish not to be, and downright hip, to look unkempt." (Lay off the bong.)

A reader learns to read between the lines. Brinkley is loath to say anything critical of Kerry, but every once in a while the cat slips out of the bag anyway, purring suggestively. In prep school, a friend recalls, "John was always talking about global issues. He was only eighteen years old and he knew just everything about politics. . . . That annoyed some people. No doubt about it." "He relished holding court on every policy issue," Brinkley writes. Translation: He was a know-it-all.

"He always had a sense," says another friend, "of his place in history as a young man." He loved public speaking in the exhortatory mode, especially when he himself was doing the speaking, and he got to hector his first big audience in 1958, at the age of fifteen, in a speech to his classmates called "The Plight of the Negro." One Negro was present. When he vacationed abroad as a college student, another friend recalls, "There was only one thing John *had* to do in London, and that was go to Hyde Park Corner and make a speech. He stood up on a soapbox and off he went." Translation: He was a windbag *and* a know-it-all.

Though born well-to-do, Kerry never hit the big money until he landed his second wife, Teresa Heinz. His father was a foreign-service officer and lawyer, his mother an heiress to a shipping trust. They shuffled Kerry and his sister among postings in Massachusetts and Berlin and Oslo and Washington and London, before parking the kids in a series of private schools in Europe and New England. The longest he lived anywhere as a boy was in a large house in a suburb of Boston. He stayed there two years before being uprooted again by his restless parents. Still, he tells Brinkley, those two years in the suburb "gave me a sense of belonging to the land."

That remark, pompous in the unmistakable Kerry style, is touching in its way, too. His parents were stern and emotionally remote. There was family wealth—sailboats and biking trips through the English countryside—but no familial warmth. When Brinkley writes about Kerry's first years in prep school, that "his life would have been simpler, in fact, if he had been an African American from Atlanta or an Okie from Tulsa," it is not *quite* (italics mine again) as stupid as it sounds. Kerry was plunged by his parents into a class system in which ambition was frowned upon, where, even in the early 1960s, irony and detachment were highly prized, and by nature, Kerry was gnawingly ambitious and utterly without irony. He had his own struggles.

Of course, you can't feel too sorry for him too long. By the time he graduated from Yale he had also enjoyed a sunlit cascade of summers wandering the Riviera, weekends sailing in Newport, double dates with Auchinclosses and Bundys (McGeorge's side of the family, not Al's). He had watched the America's Cup in the company of President

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and Mrs. Kennedy. He surfed, sailed, skied, and flew private planes for recreation. At Yale he was enlisted into Skull and Bones, the most widely-publicized "secret society" in the world, joining the ranks of such "Bonesmen" as George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, along with more Harrimans, Rockefellers, and Whitneys than you could spank with a riding crop. That's what they're called, by the way, "Bonesmen"—though "Boners" is a better word for this collection of stiff pricks.

When Kerry graduated in 1966, having been voted class orator, he delivered another of his public scoldings. It was a skeptical critique of the Vietnam war. "What was an excess of isolationism has become an excess of interventionism," he announced to his classmates. "And this Vietnam war has found our policymakers forcing Americans into a strange corner." The speech was warmly received. Then Kerry left school, joined the Navy, enrolled in Officer's Training, and prepared to be sent to Vietnam.

But why? If Kerry found the war morally dubious and strategically unwise, and had gone out of his way to declare his views publicly, why did he enlist? It is a question a skilled biographer might be able to penetrate, especially with the access Brinkley was given, but our presidential historian never shows much interest in it. A reader is left to surmise. Many of Kerry's best friends from school were enlisting; for a certain kind of Yale man, it was what a Yale man did. In 1966, of course, the Sixties had not yet quite begun, and Kerry was under the sway of an older ethic that was only then beginning to crumble. The best explanation Brinkley offers comes from one of Kerry's classmates: "You've got to understand that a large percentage of our class was much more traditional in their view of society, and of their obligations to their country. . . . It shifted dramatically between '66 and '68. So I would say we [the class of '66] were much more like the class of '56."

Whatever its origins or inspirations, Kerry's service as a lieutenant in the Navy forms the hinge-point of his life story and the crux of Brinkley's book. It makes for good, though sometimes excessively detailed, reading. The most vivid and eloquent passages come from Kerry himself, in letters and diaries that Brinkley quotes at length. They reveal a young man of great intelligence, sensitivity, and self-awareness. Those who know the story of Kerry's Vietnam experience only in the roughest outline may be surprised here and there by Brinkley's account. Of Kerry's two tours of duty, his first was spent almost entirely at sea, as a deck officer on the frigate USS *Gridley*. He never saw battle. His second tour lasted four months, all of them in Vietnam. When it was over he had earned three Purple Hearts, one Bronze Star, and one Silver Star, making him the most decorated "Swift boat" commander of the time.

William Morrow

John Kerry with John Lennon at a protest in 1971.

Swift boats—fifty-foot aluminum craft built to maneuver in shallow water—were assigned to patrol the Mekong Delta, stopping Viet Cong supply boats loaded with ordnance for guerrilla fighters in the south. It was perilous duty. Kerry volunteered for it. "You had to be a bit of a cowboy to want a Swift," a veteran tells Brinkley. "It meant that you were willing to get shot up all the time." On the evidence, Kerry was indeed a bit of a cowboy, though he never endangered his men unnecessarily, and he did indeed get shot up, though only one of his three wounds put him out of action for any length of time. Kerry's heroism is simply a fact, bald and undeniable. And it is the form his heroics took that is especially impressive.

"He was in total control, and willing to be aggressive," says one of his crewmen. "He wanted to take the fight to the enemy. . . . He always put his men's welfare first, and he was tough, tough, tough. He was a great leader."

Kerry's Bronze Star was awarded for an action that has lately been well-publicized—the rescue of Army Lieutenant Jim Rassman, who earlier this year, unbidden, phoned Kerry's presidential campaign days before the Iowa caucuses and volunteered to help. Rassman believes, and the citation makes clear, that he owes his life to Kerry and his crew. When a fleet of Swift boats came under heavy fire from AK-47s and rocket launchers on shore, several of the boats were blown to a shambles, and Rassman was thrown overboard. He swam through sniper fire coming from both banks of the river, but there was nowhere to go. Kerry turned his boat and headed into the barrage, toward the floundering Rassman. Though his own right arm had already been hit by shrapnel, Kerry left his pilothouse and pulled Rasmussen out of the water as his crew returned a hail of gun and rocket fire.

His Silver Star was also a consequence of Kerry's aggressiveness. Heading through the mangrove swamps one morning, Kerry's boat was ambushed by automatic weapons and small arms, as well as a rocket launcher, coming from somewhere on shore. Instead of turning the boat back from the line of fire, which would have exposed other crews to danger, Kerry ordered his helmsman to steer the Swift straight to the point on shore from which the gunfire was blazing. He beached the boat, grabbed his M-16,

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Kerry campaigns in 2004

Reuters

jumped off, and headed into the jungle after the scattering Viet Cong. When one of them turned around and aimed his B-40 rocket launcher, Kerry shot and killed him. The ensuing firefights took eight more Viet Cong lives and prevented further ambushes.

"I was shocked when Kerry beached the boat," another crewman tells Brinkley. "He saved the day and our lives."

"What Kerry did was against the rules," another said. "We had been taught that we weren't supposed to become jungle fighters. But thank god he did."

Kerry's "extraordinary daring and personal courage," said the citation, "in attacking a numerically superior force in the face of intense fire were responsible for the highly successful mission."

Having been wounded three times, Kerry was entitled to ask for reassignment, and he did, angling for something out of the line of fire. He was sent home early, to Brooklyn, where he landed a comfortable assignment as a personal aide to an admiral, who after a few more months granted Kerry's request for early discharge from the Navy. Kerry was in a hurry because there was an election coming up and he wanted to run for Congress—as an antiwar candidate.

Kerry failed in his bid for a congressional seat, but there was a silver lining. He quickly became famous as a leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and, in an action that's as notable as his heroism, threw his battle ribbons away during a protest at the Capitol. (He also tossed the medals of two other veterans who had, he later said, given them to him for that purpose, though at the time he was happy to let bystanders think the medals were his own.) In televised testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he characterized the behavior of his fellow servicemen in terms that bordered on slander. He ran for Congress again, lost again, went to law school, and continued his climb up the greasy pole of Massachusetts politics, eventually entering the Senate in 1985.

The pattern that runs through Kerry's political life was thus established from the moment he left the service: He is expert at having it both ways. He got hero points for bravely fighting in the war and sensitivity points for believing that the war he bravely fought in was barbaric. He has slid from one side of this formula to the other as the situation requires, and only a few of his hostile fellow veterans have been so crude as to point out that, by his own logic, he is a war criminal.

"I never wanted to be a professional veteran," he protested to a reporter during one of his early political campaigns. But of course that's what he's been, unavoidably. In his public presentation, he is a dour, pompous, and unlikable man. His political career—and his success during this presidential campaign, when his fellow Democrats ache for a candidate who will appear strong on "national security"—is unimaginable without his extraordinary service in Vietnam.

God knows, and experience proves, that he won't shut up about it. It has become his own personal bloody shirt. Kerry's eagerness to bring up his military service at every opening strikes many people, including all Republicans, as opportunism, as just one more instance of an ambition that will exploit anything on the path to its own fulfillment. But there are other possibilities, if we can briefly extend him the benefit of the doubt. It might also be the way a reflective man responds to an experience he's never quite been able to get over. And because he can't quite get over it, he doesn't want us to either. This may be narcissism, but it's not opportunism, necessarily, and in any case it's perfectly understandable, and probably not worth criticizing.

Brinkley writes at great length about Kerry's antiwar activism and only a bit less about his later political career. For anyone interested in these phases of the story, however, *Tour of Duty* is nearly worthless. His devotion to Kerry is simply too large. Brinkley spends a single paragraph on the medal-throwing, for example, and though he dedicates many pages to Kerry's courtship of his first wife, he mentions their divorce in a single phrase. All the less commendable events of the post-Vietnam career are ignored or smoothed over.

This is, as we've seen, a professional hazard common to "presidential historians." Yet the same reticence is shared also by two generations of Americans, who have never seen combat themselves, or indeed any kind of life-threatening struggle, and who puzzle over what they might do if they did. In a country like ours, where life is generally so soft and easeful, heroism is a special kind of conversation-stopper. What are we to do when confronted with a veteran like Kerry, who charged when we might have run, whose courage came out when the stakes were highest?

We look at our shoes and shuffle our feet. We don't ask too many questions. We shut up. We let him go on and on about his "life of service to our country." As we should. ♦

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Irrational Exuberance

Life in the dot-com boom and bust.

BY DAVID DEVOSS

At the beginning of the 1990s, 66 billionaires topped *Forbes* magazine's list of the 400 Richest People in America. By the end of the decade, the number had risen to 274. Never before in the history of the republic had there been such a period of wealth creation. In the previous century dominated by Carnegie, Morgan, and Rockefeller, the 1990s would have been called a Golden Age. Most of America's new billionaires, however, preferred to think of themselves as living a "paradigm shift."

Executives atop the corporate food chain said America was inventing a "New Economy." That certainly seemed to be the case. For most of the 20th century, fortunes had been built on petroleum, mechanized labor, and ferrous metals. But as society raced toward the millennium, the country's richest companies consisted of little more than electrons, binary code, and stock options. New Economy executives, collectively known as "the digerati," seemed unconcerned that many of their enterprises owned little real estate or fixed assets. Why worry about profit when even "prerevenue" companies had astounding market value? The analog world of bricks and mortar was crumbling, they intoned piously. Internet companies selling information technology were the future, and anyone who disagreed simply didn't get it.

Lots of smart folks had climbed aboard the Internet bandwagon. Futurists Alvin and Heidi Toffler announced that human society had been transformed three times: first by agriculture, then by capitalism, and now by cybernetics. Novelist Michael Crichton predicted that the mass media as it presently existed would be gone in ten years. "Vanished, without a trace," he affirmed. Over at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, computer libertarian and Grateful Dead lyricist John Perry Barlow argued that public perceptions of wealth, ownership, and copyright were changing "more fundamentally than at any time since the Sumerians first poked cuneiform into wet clay."

And then it ended, sort of. In a wave of bankruptcies, one dot-com after another succumbed, leaving investors to conclude that their new paradigm had relied in part on a Ponzi scheme kept in motion by overpriced web advertising and corporate stock. Now, after three years of recession, innumerable accounting scandals, the NASDAQ's collapse, and the most disastrous merger in corporate history, it's appropriate to look back on the dot-com mania, if only to insure that the promise of a wired world eventually will be redeemed.

Six recently published books, all of them written by working journalists, offer complementary perspectives on this period. Three are by writers who covered the dot-com boom and its eventual bust as business reporters for *Vanity Fair*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Two are more intimate portraits by industry insiders whose magazines—*Wired* and the *Industry Standard*—both shaped and reflected the digital culture's hubris, enthusiasm, hysteria, and deceit. The final offering is an introspective tale of a journalist who abandoned common sense in a desperate pursuit of the wealth that for a few brief years seemed to be every investor's due.

If information technology had a bible in the mid 1990s, it was a monthly magazine called *Wired*. Founded in 1993 by Louis Rossetto, a Long Island Republican turned Libertarian, *Wired* was premised on the belief that people linked by computer technology had the power to override existing political authority to create an autonomous global community. "You, the information rich," Rossetto wrote in his opening manifesto, "are the most powerful people on the planet today. You and the information technology you wield are completely transforming our lives, our families, our neighborhoods, our educations, our jobs, our governments, our world."

Rossetto's magazine and the passions it continues to inspire are remembered in Gary Wolf's *Wired—A Romance*. Present at the creation, Wolf, who still writes for the magazine as a contributing editor, deftly recounts its early days in San Francisco when the publication's staff thumbed its nose at mainstream culture and compared the development of digital technology to the discovery of fire.

Rossetto hated politics, but his magazine was far from apolitical. "The issue of *Wired* that was on the newsstand when Netscape went public had the face of Newt Gingrich on its cover," Wolf recounts. "Inside, Gingrich reported that he had composed his book, *To Renew America*, on his laptop computer, a notable achievement at this early date when most members of Congress did not type." Gingrich's cover photo, Wolf continues, "signaled the magazine's hope that its pro-business, anti-government sensibility might be the advance wave of a genuinely popular movement."

Wired loved to upset its readers. Referring to Al Gore, Newt Gingrich observed, "He's repainting the den; I want to build a whole new house. My project, frankly, is to replace his world."

Pundits savaged the magazine for its antiestablishment views, but *Wired*'s editor refused to bend. "We are comfortable with change agents at any level of society," Wolf remembers Rossetto admonishing his staff, as critical mail piled up. "Whether they are nerds

David DeVoss, editor of East-West News, covered the dot-com boom for a variety of publications.

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down at the bottom or whether they are people in corporations at the top, or people like Newt Gingrich: if they are actually provoking change that is part of this large, historical trend, then we talk about them."

The great flaw in *Wired* and other industry publications was their boosterism. Yes, the Internet had the potential to change the world, but the only websites making money at that time were those providing email, porno, and celebrity chat. Indeed, most web businesses consisted of little more than promotional hoopla. Even *Wired*. It may have had a market value of $450 million, but under Rossetto *Wired* never recorded a profit. In 1996, its best year ever, the magazine lost $10 million.

Red ink didn't seem to bother investors. In 1996, the level of venture capital funding stood at $10 billion. By 1999 it had quintupled. The annual number of IPOs jumped from a few dozen in 1996 to more than 200 three years later.

According to Internet publications, web visionaries were responsible for the booming economy. In truth, investment bankers and Wall Street analysts were calling the shots, but they seldom were the focus of stories. Neither did dot-com journalists write much about "spinning," a practice by which web executives were allowed to buy day-of-sale IPO stock for a quick windfall if they promised future business to the investment bank handling the IPO.

Like the Sunday travel page, newspaper technology sections were packed with ads. Tech editors did not want critical reporting to jeopardize this new and robust revenue stream. At *Investor's Business Daily*, the San Jose-based "Information Society" editor with whom I worked told me not to put a lot of effort into dot-com profiles. He said I should tell what the startup was supposed to do, add a quote from a Gartner or Forrester analyst, and then close with a prediction from the CEO about future growth.

Later, a magazine called *Knowledge Management* asked me to write about a new web talent exchange called eWork. The site functioned like a virtual job fair where contractors posted their résumés in the hope they would be digitally matched with projects requiring their talents. Internet job boards like *Monster.com* and *CareerPath.com* had grown to enormous size offering a similar service. eWork had tweaked the idea by allowing job seekers to pay extra to skew the matching algorithm so their name would get priority when a potential match was found. The problem was that the only person I could find who had ever found employment through eWork was the programmer hired to build the website. My editor was reluctant to kill the story since every analyst he knew said newspaper classifieds were like dinosaurs waiting for the meteor. In the end, my revealing information about eWork's track record was deleted. In its place ran a futurist's rave about the fungibility of knowledge and how employers now would find it easier to outsource projects to India.

Wired
A Romance
by Gary Wolf
Random House, 282 pp., $29.95

Starving to Death on $200 Million
The Short, Absurd Life of the Industry Standard
by James Ledbetter
Public Affairs, 291 pp., $26

There Must Be a Pony in Here Somewhere
The AOL Time Warner Debacle and the Quest for the Digital Future
by Kara Swisher
Crown, 289 pp., $24.95

Stealing Time
Steve Case, Jerry Levin, and the Collapse of AOL Time Warner
by Alec Klein
Simon & Schuster, 336 pp., $25.95

Fools Rush In
Steve Case, Jerry Levin, and the Unmaking of AOL Time Warner
by Nina Munk
Harper Business, 352 pp., $26.95

American Sucker
by David Denby
Little Brown, 320pp., $24.95

The New Economy desperately needed a publication that would cover rather than celebrate dot-coms, and in April 1998 it got one in the *Industry Standard*. One of the *Standard*'s new editors was a former *Village Voice* media critic named James Ledbetter, and his account of the magazine's brief but glorious life is *Starving to Death on $200 Million: The Short, Absurd Life of the Industry Standard*.

Ledbetter's introduction to Internet culture came in a Manhattan nightclub at a party celebrating Lycos's purchase of Tripod, a website design company started by a twenty-six-year-old Williams College student. Lycos paid $65 million for the company despite the fact Tripod gave away its service for free. "My first impression was of youth," Ledbetter writes. "Here were more than 150 people, and at the ripe old age of 33 I could plausibly have been the oldest person in the room.... Here were enormous sums floating around to create a medium I didn't understand—but my younger, more energetic colleagues seemed to."

By the winter of 2000, the New Economy was in the middle of what *Standard* editors called "the fat year." So much money was pouring into the stock market that Internet companies were experiencing "viral growth." The previous year, investment banks handled more than 200 dot-com IPOs alone. There was plenty of capital for new ventures. Editor Kurt Andersen told the *Washington Post* that getting $28 million to start up his online media magazine, *Inside.com*, was as easy "as getting laid in 1969."

Once the province of early adapters, the e-tailers, e-brokerages, and websites selling virtual real estate (Find Your House With a Mouse!) were now mainstream. Since few were making money, most attempted to validate their existence with advertising. Indeed, Internet companies spent $687 million on advertising in 1999, an increase of 347 percent over the previous year.

New Internet publications such as *InfoWorld*, *Interactive Week*, *Upside*, *Business 2.0*, *Red Herring*, *Forbes ASAP*, *eWeek*, *Information Week*, *CFO*, *CIO*, and *CRM* helped sop up the gravy, but much of the new ad money went to the

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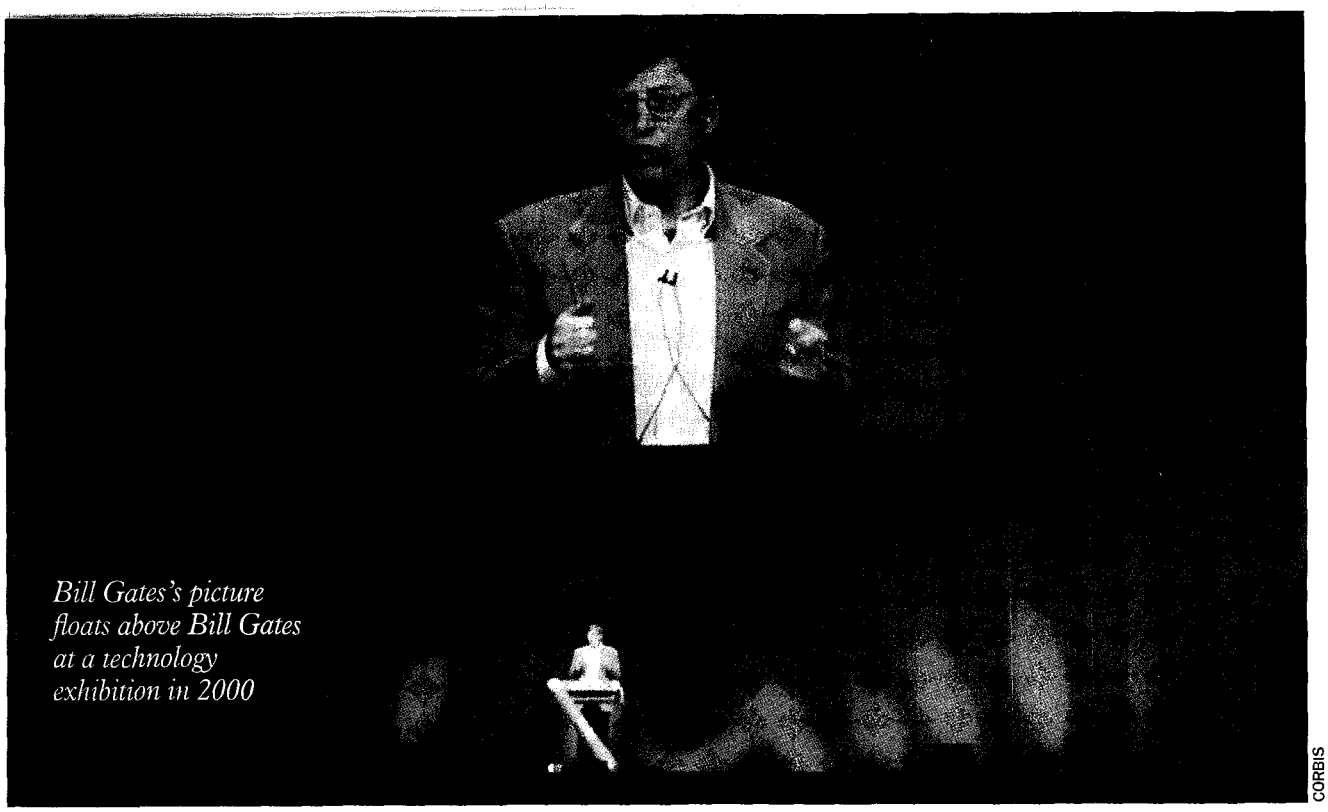

Bill Gates's picture floats above Bill Gates at a technology exhibition in 2000

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Standard. By August 2000, an issue of the *Industry Standard* was twice the size of *Newsweek*. And by the end of the year, it had sold 7,440 pages of advertising and had a net worth approaching $450 million.

Internet magazines spent money as fast as it rolled in. At *Wired*, every employee received a daily backrub from a massage therapist and a company subsidized lunch prepared by a gourmet chef. At the *Standard*, there was a hosted cocktail party every Friday, temps were hired to fill out expense reports for Excel-challenged staffers, and any woman who complained of stress was told to get a complimentary facial.

How did the *Standard* manage to get rich so quickly? By using a technique called "controlled circulation." "A good portion of the magazine's circulation was given away for free," Ledbetter confides. "Traditionally, the gamble is that advertisers will be so enticed by the demographic desirability of a publication's readers that they will overlook the fact that those readers aren't paying for the publication."

Giving the magazine away saves a publisher the considerable expense of soliciting subscription renewals. Upscale readers pay for the magazine by periodically submitting information about themselves that the publisher then can sell to direct marketers. The process, called "customer relations management," in theory should produce a second revenue stream. The problem, of course, is that it's nearly impossible to verify the data your freebie subscribers submit. And when times turn bad, as they soon did for the *Standard*, both advertising and the amount marketers will pay for information decline in tandem. By August 2001, a year after its peak, the *Industry Standard* was defunct.

By the start of 1999, AOL had become the most powerful Internet company in the world. The 16-year-old Internet service provider was more valuable than General Motors and Boeing combined. But Steve Case, AOL's billionaire chairman and CEO, knew he needed an established bricks-and-mortar partner if his company were to survive a Wall Street slump or an attack by Microsoft. AOL's pursuit and eventual purchase of Time Warner is documented in three new books, which dissect the biggest merger in U.S. history from complementary perspectives.

In *Fools Rush In*, *Vanity Fair* contributing editor Nina Munk notes that the two companies seemed to have little in common. Time Warner had revenues of $27 billion and 70,000 employees, while AOL had less than $5 billion in revenues and fewer than 15,000 employees. "But from the perspective of the stock market," she writes, "AOL, a company with one-fifth the revenues of Time Warner was worth almost twice as much: $175 billion versus $90 billion." What AOL did not have was the Warner Bros. film library, a publishing company like Little Brown, or a cable news network. Time had all these things plus something even more valuable: the country's second largest cable system.

Time also had a CEO in Gerald Levin approaching retirement age who was looking for a "transforming transaction" to cap a remarkable career. Levin's rise to the top began in 1975 when he convinced the Time board to rent space on a communications satellite. The technological gamble made HBO a national service overnight for the bargain basement price of $6 million. Levin thought lifting Time Warner out of the analog world would be his greatest accomplishment, and it might have been if he hadn't allowed AOL, a company with less than one-third of the operating cash, to grab 55 percent of the newly merged company.

A technology reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, Kara Swisher (with Lisa Dickey) brings the cast of corporate characters to life in the deftly written

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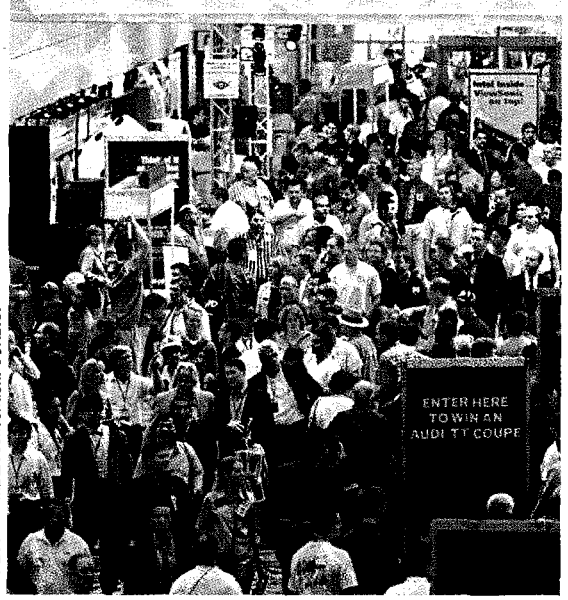

The 1999 COMDEX convention. CORBIS.

chronicle *There Must Be a Pony in Here Somewhere*—a title that makes sense once you're in on the joke. According to Swisher, the deal that created AOL Time Warner, worth $310 billion at the time of the merger, sputtered from the beginning.

Time's overseas correspondents went into near revolt when forced to use AOL's kludgy software. Expected synergies failed to materialize; corporate cultures clashed. By January 2002, AOL Time Warner stock was worth just $25 a share, reducing the value of the company to $147 billion. *Time* magazine's art critic Robert Hughes asked Gerald Levin in a very public email: "How can you face yourself knowing how much history, value and savings you have thrown away on your mad, ignorant attempt to merge with a wretched dial-up ISP?"

A dip in web advertising in the second half of 2000 combined with the plunging value of AOL Time Warner stock should have sent a warning to savvy investors. But it didn't. At the November 2000 Comdex—the annual Las Vegas trade show for computer resellers that had morphed over time into a massive Nerdapalooza for hundreds of thousands of corporate executives, electronics manufacturers, and software retailers—the faithful showed up again to hear Microsoft CEO Bill Gates's annual "state of the industry" speech. In fact Gates's address invariably was an extended commercial for Microsoft products. But that was okay with the 12,000 people shouting, "Bill! Bill! Bill!" in hopes of hastening the appearance of the man who made employee stock options a national currency.

Gates's arrival was followed by a moment of homage worthy of Leni Riefenstahl, during which photographers rushed the stage while affluent spectators, comfortably settled on the far side of middle age, joyfully saluted the world's richest man with the illuminated faces of their cell phones and Palm Pilots.

"Ninety-nine percent of the great Internet applications have yet to be written," Gates said once the frenzy abated. "Consumers will see immediate benefits from our ability to tear down the walls that prevent people from using information in a really meaningful way."

To clarify exactly what he meant, Gates introduced designer Ralph Lauren's son David, who explained how he used Microsoft software to create a website (*www.polo.com*) that helps the fashion-challenged select attire for business trips and learn how to prevent cashmere from pilling. "With our 'Ask Ralph' feature we've gone beyond the flat screen to create what I call 'merchantainment,'" Lauren beamed. "Now it's possible to not only buy clothes but also book a spa vacation at the same time."

More than 200 dot-coms declared bankruptcy in 2000. Those that remained found it almost impossible to acquire venture capital because of accounting shenanagins of the sort described by *Washington Post* reporter Alec Klein in *Stealing Time*. Klein's dissection of AOL's accounting procedures is frightening, if only because it shows how easy it is for dishonest executives to inflate the value of corporate stock.

At every party there's a first to leave and last to arrive. Steve Case sold massive amounts of AOL stock just before and during the merger, according to Kara Swisher, pocketing nearly $400 million before taxes. About the time Case was getting out of the market, *New Yorker* film critic David Denby was getting in. Denby ended up losing nearly $900,000, a sum that more than justifies the name of his book, *American Sucker*.

In need of cash following the breakup of his marriage, Denby looked around, saw everybody getting rich, and decided he, too, would make his million. Unfortunately, he turned to Merrill Lynch stock analyst Henry Blodget and ImClone head Sam Waksal for investment advice. It's easy to blame Denby's New Economy misadventure on the envy and avarice of Manhattan's Upper West Side, but readers with diminished 401(k)s, wherever they live, will identify with his futile effort to swim with the sharks.

Today, tech stocks are on the rebound. IBM is back in the black. Yahoo! just recorded a $238 million profit. Time Warner's revenue is rising despite the defection of millions of AOL subscribers. Even Henry Blodget, who once earned $12 million a year for dispensing misleading advice, is back in the game, assigned to cover the Martha Stewart trial for *Slate.com*. By next year it may even be a compliment to say a fast track executive has "digital DNA." But before you jump back into the NASDAQ, hearken to what these dot-com journos have to say.

Strict accounting can measure the performance of a corporation, but the value of its stock floats on conjecture and romantic dreams. It's easy for business professionals, professors, and, yes, even journalists to abandon restraint when secretaries are getting rich from IPOs and your college roommate just quit his job to become a day trader. Now that the NASDAQ is climbing, you'll soon be buying tech stocks once again. You can't fight human nature. ♦

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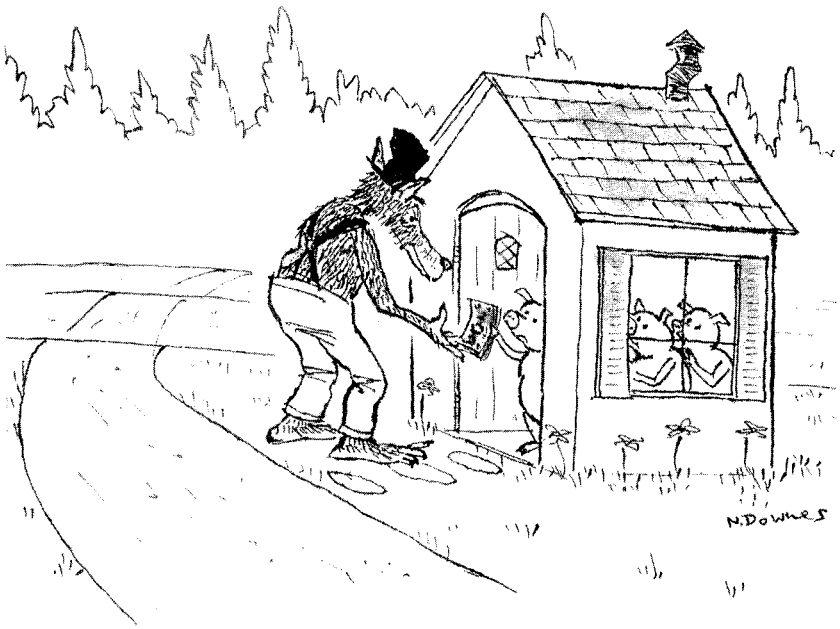


The Big Bad Wolf and the Three Paying Pigs

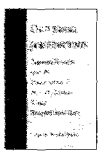
Books in Brief

***Storms, Ice, and Whales: The Antarctic Adventures of a Dutch Artist on a Norwegian Whaler* by Willem van der Does (Eerdmans, 391 pp., $29).** Whaling, writes Willem van der Does, is "probably the most adventurous work that has ever existed," and few readers of his account of a 1923 voyage aboard the *Sir James Clark Ross* would disagree. Persuasive eyewitness accounts of maritime exploration are rare (the *Ross* combined its whaling operations with a first mapping of the Antarctic coastline). Those who excel at polar exploration are more likely to be the Viking warrior type (with which the *Ross* was well supplied) than artists trained to reproduce the sublime vistas before them.

But that is what van der Does was, and if his India-ink drawings of whales, penguins, ice floes, and ship's tackle never rise above their illustrative duty, the man's account of workaday life aboard a twentieth-century whaler is worth a place beside such classics of the sea as Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* and Melville's *Typee*. *Moby Dick* it's not, admittedly, but if Melville could have read it, you can be sure there would have been extensive excerpts in his front matter for that book.

Van der Does's most singular charm is his artlessness. It is as though Billy Budd, not the world-weary Ishmael, were the narrator of *Moby Dick*. In later years van der Does would be reckoned one of Holland's best landscapists, but the sea and the ice were clearly his muses, against whose lure the domestic hearth was powerless. Armchair voyagers who have sailed everywhere with Patrick O'Brian cannot do better than to sign on with Willem van der Does.

—*Thomas M. Disch*



***Universal Jurisdiction: National Courts and the Prosecution of Serious Crimes Under International Law*, edited by Stephen Macedo (University of Pennsylvania Press, 376 pp., $59.95).** Last summer, the Belgian government was embarrassed to discover that its courts were entertaining indictments against Gen. Tommy Franks for crimes against humanity, on the basis of a statute that gave Belgian courts "universal jurisdiction": the power to prosecute serious international crimes no matter where committed, by whom, or against whom.

The basic idea originated as a way to prosecute piracy on the high seas—a crime committed outside any jurisdiction. The modern doctrine, which now includes such crimes as genocide and torture, is articulated in the "Princeton Principles," a fourteen-point declaration drafted by an international conference of scholars and jurists in 2001. The conference chairman, Stephen Macedo, brings the text of the Principles together with a series of articles by conference participants in *Universal Jurisdiction*, a valuable resource for any study of this somewhat outlandish area of international law.

As Belgium has learned, universal jurisdiction has a disturbing tendency to expand its own scope. In her contribution to *Universal Jurisdiction*, Anne-Marie Slaughter acknowledges the doctrine has the potential for abuse, and that it raises "the specter of a small group of nations taking it upon themselves to prosecute officials from other nations based on their particular conception of customary international law." Indeed, the principles acknowledge few limitations. Even amnesties such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission can be disregarded years after the fact. *Universal Jurisdiction* raises many troubling questions, but does not satisfactorily answer them. It is the product of a cloistered debate among supporters of the theory, and is more esoteric than penetrating.

The Belgians, for their part, were drawn out of cloisters last summer when Donald Rumsfeld calmly pointed out that NATO headquarters could hardly stay in a country where its commanders were subject to sham indictments. The squirming Belgians quickly repealed the statute. Within days, six human-rights groups condemned the United States for a "worldwide campaign against international justice."

—*Mario Loyola*

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Parody

"Dr. Khan's annual salary as the head of the Khan Research Laboratories was $2,000 a month at the most, an official said. But the scientist purchased numerous houses in Pakistan and lived lavishly. . . . General Musharraf has said 'some individuals' appeared to have sold nuclear technology for personal gain, and he has promised to punish them."

***—The New York Times*, January 29, 2004**

General Pervez Musharraf
Leading World Person

MEMORANDUM

From: Gen. Pervez Musharraf
To: Abdul Qadeer Khan
Re: Punishment

As we know, you are the beloved father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, an achievement for which the world, or at least Pakistan, thanks you. While I do not say that you have sold nuclear secrets to scores of dangerous buyers, some of your work habits have been erratic, and our conversation recently was not entirely reassuring. As a responsible world leader I have no choice but to be harsh:

1. Transportation: Your parking space has been diminished and will now accommodate only a compact or midsize car. The truck is no longer welcome, not even "just for some extra stuff."

2. Travel:
   i. You've convinced me that North Korea's beaches are "Asia's undiscovered little gem," but you may no longer vacation there with your entire staff, especially in January—I do not care that the swimming was "bracing yet refreshing."
   ii. While you say that you "just can't get enough" of Persian hospitality, I suggest that, after 19 trips, you at least try. I did not know that Natanz has the "world's yummiest hummus," but you need not repeat it a seventh time.
   iii. Col. Qaddafi may be a "marvelous raconteur," but your statement that "days flowed into weeks, lost in the haze and tears of raucous guffaws" strikes me as insufficient cause to lengthen your two-day trip to Tripoli by three months without letting the office know. No more visits with the Colonel—even if "the phone isn't the same."

3. Extra privileges:
   i. I too have partaken of the simple pleasures of fomenting unrest in Kashmir, but it is inappropriate for you to offer to "help kick it up a notch." And I decide whether the Pakistani intelligence service "needs a real shot in the arm."
   ii. I understand that "just tinkering around" with fissile material is a nice way to "let off steam," as you said, but from now on this happens at the office only. "Just borrowing" is no longer permitted.

Palace of the Illegitimacy, Military Park, Islamabad 90210

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PUBLIC POLICY?

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[illegible] eater Israel could be [illegible] experiencing a sense of [illegible]ation as one right-of-center Israeli leader after another has urged unilateral Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank or Gaza Strip, at least from those settlements that are most difficult to justify or defend. The Likud's Yuval Steinitz, head of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, has called for a pullback from the Gaza Strip, leaving the Palestinians to form their state there. Ehud Olmert, mayor of Jerusalem and a likely future candidate for prime minister, wants to abandon both Gaza and the more remote West Bank settlements. Others urge partial withdrawal as long as Israel annexes the remaining land—a formula that reportedly carries the blessing of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Why the change in thinking among Israeli hard-liners? Surely one reason is the cost of the eroding but still troublesome Intifada. Another is the demographic threat of a Palestinian population that may one day reject a two-state solution and urge instead majority rule in a single political entity. Finally, the Israelis don't trust Palestinian negotiators. With or without Arafat, they want no Oslo redux. Defensible borders, they say, are more important than negotiated borders; and, particularly with the erasure of the Iraqi threat from the east, Israel's borders have never been more defensible.

But a closer analysis suggests that the advantages of a partial withdrawal are modest and the downsides, great. A pullback would be treated by Palestinian extremists as a great victory—a vindication for their strategy of terror. They would seize the abandoned land and continue their jihad against the Jewish state. And their effort would be reinforced because no one, not even the United States, would recognize new, unilaterally declared borders. World opinion would hold the action illegal and provocative. And this time world opinion would be right.

Moreover, the terms Israel could achieve at the negotiating table are nothing to sneer at. From Camp David through Taba to Geneva, every serious plan has contained provisions establishing an international peacekeeping force. Every one has provided for a demilitarized Palestinian state. Every one has forbidden the Palestinians to enter alliances hostile to Israel. Every one has allowed a continuing Israeli security presence on Palestinian soil and the right of Israeli military planes to conduct exercises in Palestinian air space. And every one has demanded the renunciation of all claims not part of the negotiated deal—by far the best way to extinguish the Palestinian "right of return" to villages inside Israeli territory.

In diplomacy as in war, timing is everything. **The moment is approaching when negotiations with the Palestinians will be less a reward for terrorism than a way for Israel to consolidate political gains.** Outside the Jerusalem suburbs, which Israel would annex, the settlements are monuments to the fanaticism of the few compounded by the political cowardice of the many. They should revert to the Palestinians as part of a negotiated peace. But withdrawing from them unilaterally makes no more sense than building them in the first place.

—Robert Zelnick

Robert Zelnick is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and chairman of the Department of Journalism at Boston University.

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Today's cell phones aren't just smaller.

They are everywhere. Just one example of how dramatically and quickly technology has changed the way we all communicate.

Unfortunately, our telecom laws are stuck in the past, written during a time when phone calls were only made over phone lines, when cable only delivered television and when choice and competition were the exception, not the rule.

It's a whole new world in telecommunications.

It's time for the laws to catch up to our lives and unleash tomorrow's innovations, services and choices today.

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